

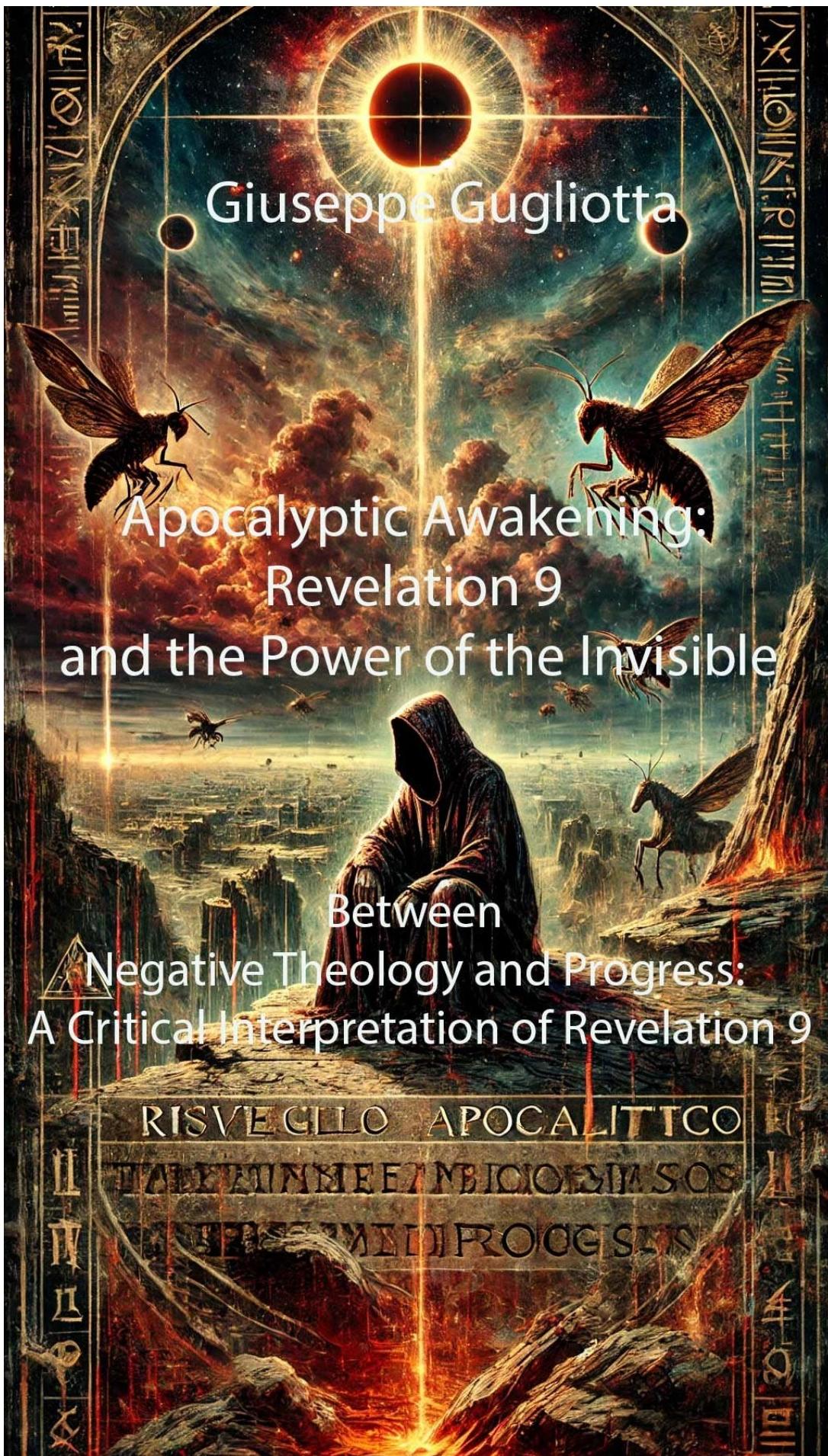
APOCALYPTIC AWAKENING: REVELATION 9 AND THE POWER OF THE INVISIBLE

In an eclipsed and ominous landscape, swarms of infernal locusts soar through the sky while an enigmatic hooded pilgrim dominates the ruins below. This scenario, inspired by Revelation 9, becomes the symbol of an "Apocalyptic Awakening" in which devastation is not an end in itself, but a prelude to a new look at the inexpressible. Between the paradoxes of

negative theology and the drive towards progress that is not purely material, the power of the invisible emerges, defying all human certainty.

In this critical reading, the crisis becomes an opportunity for awakening and rediscovering the sacred, revealing how darkness can contain the seeds of an even deeper light.

Between Negative
Theology and
Progress: A Critical
Interpretation of
Revelation 9



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The Awakened Abyss: The Dance of the Invisible Shadows



In the image one immediately perceives a strongly apocalyptic atmosphere, marked by a dark sky and an almost eclipsed sunlight, while winged and menacing figures of insects — recalling the locusts of Revelation 9 — furrow the air. In the center, a hooded character sits on a rock overlooking a landscape of ruins or desolation. The whole scene evokes tension and mystery, in tune with the idea of "Apocalyptic Awakening" and with the dimension of the "Power of the Invisible" that manifests itself beyond simple human perception.

Visual and symbolic description

The hooded figure

- It represents a pilgrim or a seeker of the sacred, immersed in a context of destructive revelation.
- The absence of facial details or individual features alludes to the idea of an "annulled" ego or in a phase of radical transformation, a theme that resonates with negative theology (God is inaccessible, man must empty himself of certainties in order to approach the Absolute).

Threatening winged insects

- They recall the vision of Revelation 9: infernal locusts that torment men. They are a symbol of judgment, but also of a "hidden" power that manifests itself suddenly, creating dismay.
- Their hybrid form — part insect, part almost demonic — can indicate the contamination between human and bestial, or between earth and underworld, typical of a world on the verge of collapse.

The sky and the eclipse

- The large luminous circle at the top, which appears as a solar eclipse, conveys a sense of cosmic catastrophe: the sunlight (symbol of truth or Grace) is partly obscured.
- At the same time, this phenomenon suggests the possibility of an awakening: the moment the light is hidden, the awareness of its importance is awakened. This ties into the idea of the "power of the unseen," where hidden or eclipsed truth can be even more powerful and transformative.

The architectural elements and ruins

- In the background you can see a destroyed city or a rocky and ruined landscape, a symbol of a decadent humanity or a collapsed worldly order.
- Such a collapse can be interpreted as the end of a cycle (apocalyptic theme), but also as the fertile ground for a new beginning, in which progress is not simply linear, but arises from the rubble of what has been destroyed.

Inscriptions or symbols in the margins

- They recall an aura of mystery and esoteric knowledge, as if they were apocalyptic formulas or seals. They indicate the need to decipher a secret language in order to fully understand the meaning of the Apocalypse, in line with the approach of negative theology: what is revealed is never completely graspable with discursive reason, but needs an inner journey.

Thematic analysis

Doctrine of Revival

- The image conveys a sense of tension towards a radical awareness. In the tradition of spiritual "awakening," crisis (the Apocalypse, judgment, suffering) is often an opportunity to rediscover a higher principle or to transcend human limitations.

- The solitary figure embodies the researcher who, in chaos, finds the possibility of a return to the essential.

Negative Theology

- The darkness and the presence of cryptic symbols recall the idea of a God who cannot be understood directly, but only through emptiness, silence and the experience of mystery.

- The hood and the absence of details underline the inscrutability of the sacred: the divine essence remains beyond any positive image, and humanity experiences the annihilation of its own certainties.

Power and Progress

- The element of "power" is evident in the devastating force of the locusts and the eclipse, symbols of a higher authority intervening to upset the earthly order.

- "Progress" is not seen as a mere technological or linear improvement, but as a painful passage through ruin and judgment. The hope of rebirth (awakening) is based on the ability to go beyond the catastrophe, recognizing the reality of an invisible yet very powerful power.

In summary, the image is a powerful condensation of biblical, mystical and philosophical themes. It recalls the scene of Revelation 9, with the opening of the abyss well and the appearance of infernal locusts, but it does so in a symbolic key: the darkening light, the ruin of the world, the hooded figure and hybrid beings reveal the need for a new vision. From the point of view of negative theology, what man believes he knows collapses before the Absolute; The "power of the invisible" then becomes a call to recognize the divine ineffability. Yet, in this scenario of disintegration, we see the possibility of an awakening: a progress that does not consist in an easy triumph, but in a conscious crossing of darkness, loss and mystery.

The image, therefore, is not simply an illustration of misfortune or terror, but an invitation to read the apocalyptic text as an initiatory drama: the end of the world as we know it can be the beginning of a deeper understanding of reality, where the divine — although invisible and elusive — makes itself present in a radical way. In this sense, "Apocalyptic Awakening: Revelation 9 and the Power of the Invisible" becomes not just a title, but a visual and conceptual synthesis of a path that combines crisis and revelation, destruction and renewal, shadow and light.

Apocalyptic Awakening: Revelation 9 and the Power of the Unseen

Between Negative Theology and Progress: A Critical Reading of Revelation 9

In an eclipsed and ominous landscape, swarms of infernal locusts soar through the sky while an enigmatic hooded pilgrim dominates the ruins below. This scenario, inspired by Revelation 9, becomes the symbol of an "Apocalyptic Awakening" in which devastation is not an end in itself, but a prelude to a new look at the inexpressible. Between the paradoxes of negative theology and the drive towards progress that is not purely material, the power of the invisible emerges, defying all human certainty. In this critical reading, the crisis becomes an opportunity for awakening and rediscovering the sacred, revealing how darkness can contain the seeds of an even deeper light.

The Dance of the Invisible Shadows

The following four images feature a visual interpretation inspired by Revelation 9, a chapter that describes apocalyptic events characterized by swarms of hellish locusts and devastation. Each image includes common elements: a hooded pilgrim, architectural ruins, dark skies, and swarms of winged creatures. These details are powerful symbols that converge towards the theme of the "Apocalyptic Awakening" and the relationship between destruction and the discovery of the sacred.

Image 1



In the first image, the hooded pilgrim stands in a landscape dominated by ruined classical columns and a fiery sky. Swarms of locusts fly overhead, creating a sense of oppression and threat. The destroyed classical architecture represents the fall of human certainties and civilization, while the solitary figure suggests introspection and spiritual research. Central enlightenment could symbolize a possibility of redemption or awakening in the midst of destruction.

Image 2



The second image broadens the perspective with a broader view of the apocalyptic landscape. The pilgrim is placed on an elevated rock, observing a completely devastated city, with burning buildings and swarms of locusts ploughing through the sky. The composition evokes a sense of human isolation in the face of the immensity of the crisis. The hooded figure seems to represent a witness or mediator between the visible chaos and the invisible sacred emerging from the darkness.

Image 3



The third image introduces brighter elements than the previous ones: the sun appears between the threatening clouds, suggesting a rising light in the midst of the disaster. The pilgrim stands next to architectural ruins that seem to belong to an ancient temple, strengthening the link with spirituality and sacredness. Locust swarms continue to dominate the sky, but the overall atmosphere seems to suggest a transition to a new consciousness rather than just destruction.

Image 4



The fourth image is distinguished by the presence of a cross next to the hooded pilgrim, an explicit symbol of the Christian faith. In the background you can see a city with architectural domes that evoke sacred places or lost civilizations. The sky is still turbulent, but the central lighting evokes the idea of hope or redemption. The cross could represent a fixed point in the crisis, indicating that the rediscovery of the sacred is possible even in the midst of devastation.

The four images form a coherent visual narrative that reflects the summary of the essay "Apocalyptic Awakening: Revelation 9 and the Power of the Unseen." Destruction is not an end in itself; Each scene suggests a tension between chaos and order, darkness and light, loss and rediscovery. The hooded pilgrim serves as the central figure that traverses this apocalyptic landscape, symbolizing the search for the invisible and the sacred in the midst of crisis.

The set of images emphasizes the paradoxes of negative theology: darkness is not only negation but contains the seeds of a deeper light. Furthermore, the presence of the infernal locusts directly recalls Revelation 9, where they are instruments of divine punishment but also catalysts for a spiritual awakening. This dialogue between destruction and spiritual progress is at the heart of the visual and textual message.

In summary, the images not only illustrate the apocalypse described in the biblical text but reinterpret its meaning as an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between the human and the divine.

The images described contain a series of recurring and significant symbols that help to reinforce the apocalyptic and spiritual message of the sage. Here are the main symbols present and their meanings:

The hooded pilgrim

- Meaning: It represents humanity, or perhaps a specific individual, in search of meaning and redemption in the midst of chaos. The hooded figure suggests mystery, introspection and connection with the invisible. He is a mediator between the visible world of destruction and the hidden spiritual realm.
- Role: Central to all the images, she is a silent witness to the devastation, but also a symbol of hope and resilience.

The Infernal Locusts

- Meaning: Directly inspired by Revelation 9, locusts represent divine judgment, punishment, and devastation. They are apocalyptic creatures that subvert the natural order, symbolizing destructive forces that are beyond human control.
- Role: They dominate the sky in each image, creating an atmosphere of oppression, but also pushing towards a reflection on the meaning of the crisis.

The Architectural Ruins

- Meaning: They symbolize the fall of human certainties, civilizations and man-made systems. The classical columns and destroyed temples evoke the fragility of culture and material progress in the face of superior forces.
- Role: They are the constant background of the pilgrimage, reminding us that destruction can be a prelude to a rebirth.

The Dark and Turbulent Sky

- Meaning: Represents uncertainty, chaos, and imminent threat. The apocalyptic sky is a universal symbol of divine wrath or cosmic crisis.
- Role: His constant presence emphasizes the atmosphere of tension, but the rays of light that emerge in some images suggest a possible redemption.

The Cross (in the last image)

- Meaning: Explicit symbol of the Christian faith, it represents hope, redemption and connection with the sacred. It is a sign of spiritual stability in the midst of chaos.
- Role: Introduces an element of spiritual resolution, indicating that through faith or the rediscovery of the sacred, meaning can be found in the crisis.

The Emerging Light

- Meaning: Present above all in the third and fourth images, light represents hope, spiritual enlightenment and the possibility of rebirth. It is a symbol of negative theology: a deeper light can emerge from the darkness.
- Role: Contrasts with the dominant darkness, suggesting that devastation is not final but a prelude to a transformation.

The Apocalyptic Landscape

- Meaning: A world devastated by superior forces represents the annulment of the earthly order to make room for a new vision of the sacred.

- Role: It frames the other symbols, emphasizing the universal scope of the crisis described.

Synthesis of Symbols in the Set

These symbols work together to create a complex message that goes beyond just apocalyptic description. Destruction (locusts, ruins) is intertwined with elements of hope (light, cross) to suggest that chaos is not an end in itself but part of a transformative process. The hooded pilgrim acts as a common thread between these elements, representing those who face uncertainty with a gaze turned towards the invisible and the sacred.

Apocalyptic Awakening

The images connect deeply to the theme of the "Apocalyptic Awakening" through a visual narrative that intertwines destruction, crisis and the possibility of spiritual transformation. This concept, inspired by Revelation 9, is based on the idea that the apocalypse is not just an event of devastation, but a moment of revelation and rediscovery of the sacred. Here's how the images express this connection:

Destruction as a Prelude to Awakening

- The architectural ruins and the devastated landscape represent the fall of human certainties and material systems. This symbolic collapse is necessary to open a space in which the invisible and the sacred can emerge.
- The swarms of infernal locusts, which dominate the sky in every image, embody destructive forces that, while threatening, act as catalysts for spiritual awakening. In Revelation 9, locusts do not destroy completely but torment, prompting humanity to reflect and seek deeper meaning.

The Caped Pilgrim: Witness and Mediator

- The central figure of the hooded pilgrim directly connects the images to the theme of awakening. He is a symbol of the human being who goes through the apocalyptic crisis not only as a victim, but as a conscious witness.
- His solitary and contemplative position suggests a path of introspection and spiritual research. He is the one who sees beyond destruction, perceiving the invisible and sensing a light hidden in the darkness.

Darkness and Light: Negative Theology

- The dark and turbulent sky dominates the images, evoking the sense of threat and chaos typical of the apocalypse. However, in the latest images, the emerging light introduces an element of hope and redemption.
- This contrast between darkness and light reflects the paradoxes of negative theology: darkness is not only the absence of light, but can contain the seeds of a deeper revelation. The "apocalyptic awakening" takes place precisely through this dialectic.

The Cross: Symbol of the Rediscovery of the Sacred

- In the last image, the cross next to the pilgrim explicitly represents the possibility of redemption and reconciliation with the divine. It is a tangible sign of the presence of the sacred in the midst of the crisis.
- The cross introduces an eschatological dimension: the apocalyptic awakening is not only individual but collective, indicating a perspective of salvation for all humanity.

Ruins as a Symbol of Rebirth

- Architectural ruins are not just symbols of loss; they also represent the possibility of building something new on what has been destroyed. This pushes towards progress that is not purely material but spiritual.
- The antiquity of the structures (classical columns or temples) suggests a link with the past, indicating that the apocalyptic awakening also implies a rediscovery of forgotten spiritual roots.

The Apocalyptic Landscape as a Universal Metaphor

- The entire scenario described in the images (locusts, dark skies, devastation) is not just a literal illustration of Revelation 9, but a universal metaphor for the human existential crisis.
- This landscape becomes the symbolic backdrop in which the "apocalyptic awakening" takes place: the global crisis reflects the inner crisis of the human being, pushing him to confront the invisible and rediscover the sacred.

Summary of the Link

The images visually translate the theme of the "Apocalyptic Awakening" by showing how devastation (symbolized by locusts, ruins and dark skies) is necessary to open a space for spiritual revelation. The hooded pilgrim serves as a symbolic guide on this transformative path, while elements such as the emerging light and the cross indicate that a new awareness of the sacred can be born from darkness. Together, the images communicate that the apocalypse is not only an end but also a beginning: a critical moment in which humanity can rediscover what is invisible but essential.

Apophatic theology

The images described connect to negative theology through a visual representation that emphasizes the absence, mystery, and limit of human understanding in the face of the divine. Negative (or apophatic) theology is based on the idea that God cannot be fully described with positive affirmations, but only through what He is not, emphasizing the mystery and inaccessibility of the sacred. Here's how the images reflect these principles:

Darkness and Mystery

- The dark and turbulent sky that dominates the images represents the inaccessibility of the divine. Negative theology insists that God cannot be contained or explained through human concepts, and the threatening sky becomes a visual symbol of the inexpressible and hidden.
- The absence of a clear divine reference point in the images (with the exception of the cross in the last scene) recalls the idea that God cannot be represented directly, but only suggested through symbols of absence or negation.

The Caped Pilgrim: Man in Facing the Mystery

- The figure of the hooded pilgrim embodies the human being who seeks God without being able to see or fully understand him. His hidden face emphasizes the impossibility of knowing the divine directly, in line with the apophatic tradition that denies the possibility of a complete understanding of God.
- The contemplative posture of the pilgrim suggests an attitude of humility and acceptance of the mystery, typical of negative theology, which invites us to recognize the limits of human knowledge.

The Ruins: The Inadequacy of the Material

- Architectural ruins symbolize the fragility of human constructions (material and conceptual) in an attempt to understand the divine. The destruction of structures evokes the apophatic idea that any representation or image of God is inevitably inadequate and must be deconstructed to make room for mystery.
- This also reflects the iconoclastic rejection of the direct representation of the sacred, a central principle in negative theology.

Emergent Light: Presence Through Absence

- In the last images, the light emerging from the darkness does not represent a complete revelation, but a trace of the divine. This recalls the apophatic concept that God can only be perceived indirectly, through signs or blanks that indicate His presence without defining it.
- Partial light is a symbol of the tension between presence and absence: God manifests himself without ever being completely accessible.

The Cross: A Paradoxical Symbol

- In the last image, the cross introduces an explicit element of the Christian tradition but remains a paradoxical symbol: it is both a sign of the divine presence (through Christ) and a testimony of absence and sacrifice. This paradox perfectly reflects the logic of negative theology, which recognizes God as present but always beyond human comprehension.

Infernal Locusts: The Negative as Revelation

- The infernal locusts evoke the destructive forces described in Revelation 9, but in negative theology these forces can be interpreted as tools to push man to confront the divine mystery. They represent what is incomprehensible and seemingly negative, but which can lead to a deeper revelation.

Synthesis

The images embody the fundamental principles of negative theology through visual symbols that emphasize absence, mystery, and human limitation in understanding the divine. The darkness, the ruins and the locusts represent that which is destructive or hidden, while the emerging light and the cross suggest a divine presence that can only be perceived indirectly. In this context, the images do not seek to "show" God but to evoke the sense of His inaccessible transcendence, inviting the viewer to contemplate the invisible through what is visible.

The hooded pilgrim

The hooded pilgrim plays a central, multifaceted role in the images, serving as a unifying and symbolic element that embodies different aspects of the theme of the "Apocalyptic Awakening". Here's a detailed breakdown of his role:

Silent Witness

- The pilgrim is present in all the images, constantly observing the apocalyptic events that unfold around him. This makes him a silent witness to the devastation and chaos.
- His constant presence suggests that he is a conscious observer, not just a passive victim of events.

Symbol of Humanity in Crisis

- The pilgrim represents humanity in the face of the apocalyptic crisis. His solitary figure in the midst of devastation evokes a sense of vulnerability and isolation.
- At the same time, his upright and contemplative posture suggests resilience and the ability to maintain dignity even in the face of chaos.

Mediator between Visible and Invisible

- The hooded figure stands as an intermediary between the visible world of destruction and the invisible realm of the sacred.
- His face hidden by the hood symbolizes mystery and the impossibility of fully understanding the divine, in line with the principles of negative theology.

Spiritual Guide

- Although he himself is immersed in crisis, the pilgrim seems to have a guiding role. Its constant presence and its often elevated position (as in the second image) suggest that it is pointing a path through the apocalypse.
- It represents the possibility of a spiritual journey even in the most adverse circumstances.

Symbol of Introspection

- The pilgrim's hooded appearance evokes a sense of introspection and inner searching. In the midst of the chaos outside, it represents the need for an inner journey to find meaning and renewal.

Focal Point of Transformation

- The presence of the pilgrim in every scene, from the darkest to the brightest, makes him a focal point of the transformation described in the "Apocalyptic Awakening".
- It embodies the process of passing from darkness to light, from crisis to spiritual rebirth.

Connection with the Sacred

- In the last image, where the pilgrim is placed next to the cross, it becomes an explicit symbol of connection with the sacred. This visual evolution suggests that the path through the apocalypse leads to a rediscovery or renewed connection with the divine.

Representative of the Search for Meaning

- In a landscape of destruction and chaos, the pilgrim represents the persistent human search for meaning and meaning. His presence suggests that even in the most extreme circumstances, humanity continues to seek spiritual answers and connections.

In summary, the hooded pilgrim in the images is not just a passive character, but an active, multidimensional symbol. It represents humanity in crisis, spiritual searching, mediation between visible and invisible worlds, and the potential for transformation and awakening that can emerge from even the most apocalyptic situations. His constant presence ties the different scenes together, creating a coherent visual narrative of the "Apocalyptic Awakening" process.

The power of the invisible

The power of the invisible in the images described is manifested through different symbolic and visual elements that suggest the presence of something that transcends the visible. Here's how this concept is expressed:

The Darkness and the Mystery

- The dark and turbulent sky represents the invisible as a mysterious and uncontrollable force. This darkness is not just the absence of light, but a presence that permeates the apocalyptic scenario, evoking the sense of something that is beyond human comprehension.
- Darkness becomes a symbol of the invisible that manifests itself through absence, calling attention to what is not immediately visible.

The Presence of the Caped Pilgrim

- The figure of the hooded pilgrim, with his face hidden, represents an entity that interacts with the invisible. His silent and contemplative presence suggests a connection with what is not visible, as if he is listening to or perceiving something that others cannot see.
- The pilgrim embodies the idea that the invisible can be perceived through deep introspection and spiritual connection.

The Infernal Locusts

- The swarms of hellish locusts, which dominate the sky, represent destructive forces that are beyond human control. These creatures symbolize the invisible as a power that can manifest itself in unpredictable and threatening ways.
- Their constant presence in images underscores the idea that the invisible can affect the visible world in ways that are not always understandable.

The Emerging Light

- In the last images, the light emerging from the darkness represents an aspect of the invisible that becomes visible. This light is not only a source of physical enlightenment, but it also symbolizes spiritual revelation or understanding of something that was hidden.
- Light suggests that the invisible may manifest in ways that transcend material understanding, opening a space for the rediscovery of the sacred.

The Cross: Symbol of the Divine Invisible

- In the last image, the cross next to the pilgrim represents an explicit symbol of the divine invisible. The cross is a tangible sign of the presence of the sacred, even if the divine itself remains invisible.

- This symbol introduces an element of transcendence, suggesting that the invisible can be perceived through faith or spirituality.

Synthesis

The power of the invisible in images is manifested through the use of symbols that evoke mystery, transcendence and spiritual connection. The darkness, the hooded pilgrim, the infernal locusts and the emerging light are all elements that suggest the presence of something that transcends the visible, prompting the viewer to reflect on what is not immediately perceptible. These symbols create an atmosphere in which the invisible becomes an active force that influences the visible world, inviting a deeper understanding of the sacred and mystery.

Introduction

Context and Objectives

At the heart of the book of Revelation, the ninth chapter opens with the unmistakable sound of the fifth and sixth trumpets, apocalyptic signals that shake the foundations of known reality. This essay intends to explore those moments of prophetic intensity, in which cataclysm is not only destruction, but also the beginning of an inner awakening. The concept of "Apocalyptic Awakening" proposed here is closely intertwined with John's vision, in which the apparent chaos becomes an invitation to overcome conventions and embrace the mystery. In this reading, negative theology emerges as an interpretative key: it recognizes the unknowability of God and suggests that, in order to approach the Sacred, man must let himself go into emptiness, accepting the ineffable. The power of the invisible, in fact, is not limited to destroying; it also holds the capacity to transform, acting as a catalyst for progress that does not follow a linear path, but arises from crisis and catastrophe, revealing new perspectives and possibilities for rebirth.

Observing the following three images in the light of chapter 9 of Revelation and the themes of the essay – the "Apocalyptic Awakening", negative theology and the power of the invisible understood as a force as destructive as it is transforming – we can identify some key elements that dialogue with John's vision and with the idea of an apocalypse understood not only as an end, but as the beginning of an inner awakening.

The hooded figure and the swarms of insects (first image)



Description and main symbols

- In the center stands a hooded figure, wrapped in a luminous but at the same time dark mantle, as if to emphasize the ineffable and mysterious aspect of the Sacred.
- The landscape is desolate, with ruins and flames in the background: a typical post-catastrophic scenario that recalls the apocalyptic imagery.
- The insects (which can recall the locusts of Revelation 9) surround the central figure and seem to emerge from a celestial or cosmic vortex, as if they were manifestations of the "power of the unseen" that pours into the visible world.

Theological and symbolic analysis

- Negative theology: The hooded figure, without a recognizable face, evokes the idea of an unknowable God or ultimate Principle. In negative theology, God cannot be defined positively, and the dark-luminous cloak is an image that well represents the "divine darkness" (the light that blinds because it is too intense, and which therefore appears as darkness to our eyes).
- Apocalyptic Awakening: The invasion of locusts in Revelation 9 is disruptive, but in the context of the essay it also becomes an invitation to get out of convention and confront the mystery. Here, insects are suspended between threat and messengers of an "other" truth: their presence indicates that chaos is already at work, but also that from this chaos an awareness can be born.
- Power and progress: The energy that springs from the vortex in the sky, and which is reflected in the fire and ruins, shows how destruction is not an end in itself. It is an invisible power that upsets the pre-established order, preparing the ground for an evolutionary or spiritual leap.

The large luminous figure, the ruins and the columns (second image)



Description and main symbols

- In the center, an imposing figure, wrapped in an aura of intense light, almost a portal between heaven and earth.
- Around it you can see classically ruined columns, a landscape divided between flames and a river flowing in the middle. Other hooded figures sit on the sides, as witnesses or guardians of this scenario.
- Once again, swarms of insects (locusts) fly in the sky, and monstrous or ghostly faces appear at the top, symbolizing the invisible powers at work.

Theological and symbolic analysis

- The Passage and the Threshold: The ruined columns and the river that divides the scene suggest the idea of a boundary between two worlds. The large central figure could represent the angel who "blows the trumpet" or the "fallen star" of Revelation 9, the one who opens the abyss pit. It is a threshold where the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible, meet.
- Negative theology and contemplation: The two hooded figures sitting on either side are reminiscent of ascetics or monks contemplating the mystery. In the context of negative theology, the contemplative attitude requires "emptying oneself" of every concept and waiting, in silence, for the revelation that arises precisely from the abyss.
- Power of the Invisible and rebirth: The burning landscape and classical ruins evoke the fall of all cultural or religious certainty. However, the light that radiates from the center is a sign of a power capable not only of destroying but of reshaping reality. The water in the river indicates potential renewal: after the fire, the land can become fertile again for a new beginning.

[The separation between two realms and the epicenter of light \(third image\)](#)



Description and main symbols

- The scene is divided into two large areas: on the left a gray, almost ghostly landscape; on the right a landscape on fire, in red and orange tones.
- In the center, a further hooded figure, on which converges a large circle of light or golden halo, like a portal or a mystical sun.
- Locusts continue to fly above and around the figure, while menacing or monstrous forms emerge from the sky.

Theological and symbolic analysis

- Duality and integration: The division between two "realms" (one colder and one on fire) could allude to the dialectic between "death" and "rebirth", "emptiness" and "fullness", "darkness" and "fire". From an awakening perspective, the subject in the foreground is on the edge of this duality, ready to transcend it.
- The circle of light and the ineffable: The golden halo resembles a mandala or a seal of revelation; it is the presence of a mystery that illuminates but which, at the same time, remains inaccessible. Negative theology insists precisely on this threshold between knowing and not knowing: God is present, but beyond any human definition.
- Crisis as an opportunity for progress: The destructive element (fire) and the "desolate" element (barren earth) seem to converge towards a center in which the hooded figure becomes the point of fusion and transformation. The apocalyptic crisis, here, is not simply the end of everything, but the place where consciousness can undergo a qualitative leap, opening up to new possibilities of life and thought.

Connection with the essay "Apocalyptic Awakening: Revelation 9 and the Power of the Invisible"

In all three images there is an atmosphere of threshold and cataclysm. This is in line with the sage's idea that destruction is never just annihilation, but a "calling out" (ek-kaleo) to the hidden truth. The locusts of Revelation 9, in the biblical text, arouse terror, but at the same time reveal the powerlessness of human structures in the face of the divine mystery. In the perspective of the doctrine of revival, this becomes the occasion for a radical awareness, an inner reversal that leads man to listen to the ineffable.

Negative theology provides the interpretative key to interpreting the hooded figure (or hooded figures) as the symbolic incarnation of a God who cannot be defined with human categories. The darkness that envelops these entities is not mere darkness, but the light "too high" to be grasped by the rational mind. It is in this vacuum of concepts that the human being can welcome authentic Revelation.

Finally, the power of the invisible manifests itself in these representations as a force that overwhelms and subverts every scheme, but at the same time opens up to a "new creation". Progress, in fact, does not follow a straight line: it passes through crisis, catastrophe and the collapse of what appeared immutable, allowing us to see dimensions otherwise precluded.

In summary, each image translates the cornerstones of the essay into a visual key: the apocalypse is not only the end, but the beginning of an "inner awakening"; negative theology recognizes that God is present in his own absence of forms; and the power of the invisible acts as a catalyst for progress that emerges from the ashes of the known world, making possible a new horizon of meaning.

Reading Methodology

The reading we propose is based on an integrated approach, which combines the exegetical tradition with a symbolic and mystical interpretation. Starting from sacred texts and classical interpretations, the essay also delves into philosophical reflections and the doctrine of inner awakening, trying to demonstrate how the apocalyptic crisis can be transformed into an opportunity to rediscover the sacred. Through this path, the analysis opens up to interpretations that are not limited to mere literal exegesis, but that invite a profound reflection on the meaning of destruction and rebirth, emphasizing the need to welcome the invisible as an engine of transformation.

1. Revelation 9:1-2 – The Opening of the Abyss and the Divine Unknown

1 And the fifth angel sounded the trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to the earth. and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the pit of the deep, and there came up a smoke, like that of a great furnace. the sun and the air were obscured by the smoke from the well.

The following two images represent artistic and symbolic visions of the event described in Revelation 9:1-2, in which the fifth angel blows the trumpet and the abyss well is opened. Let's analyze and comment on each image.

First image



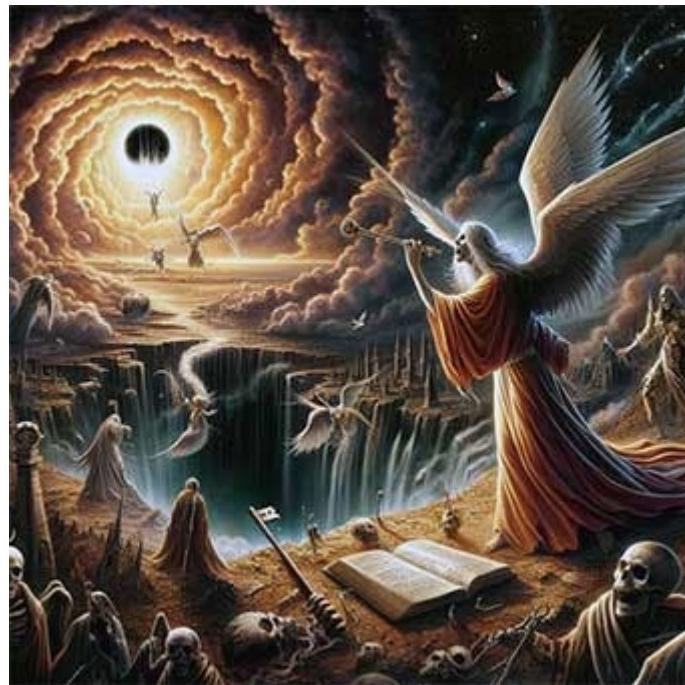
The first image presents an apocalyptic landscape dominated by a gigantic luminous vortex in the sky, which seems to symbolize the star that fell from the sky mentioned in the biblical passage. The terrain is jagged, with deep chasms and crevasses that suggest the destruction and chaos generated by the opening of the abyss pit. An infernal glow emerges from the center of the scene, accompanied by thick smoke, which recalls the "smoke like that of a great furnace" described in the sacred text.

Significant elements:

- Celestial vortex: It represents divine intervention or cosmic mystery linked to the fall of the star.
- Fiery Abyss: Symbolizes the destructive power and manifestation of divine judgment.
- Human figures: The people in the foreground observe the event, perhaps symbolizing humanity powerless in the face of divine power.

Interpretation: The image evokes a sense of terror and majesty, with a strong emphasis on the contrast between divine light and hellish darkness.

Second image



The second image explores the spiritual and symbolic dimension of the biblical passage. In the center is an angel with outstretched wings, who plays a trumpet, directly recalling the fifth angel of Revelation 9. The landscape is similar to the previous one, with chasms and smoke rising from the abyss. However, more explicit elements of the apocalyptic narrative are added here: skeletons, angelic figures and an open book in the foreground.

Significant elements:

- Angel with trumpet: Symbol of the divine call to judgment.
- Skeletons and Souls: They represent the awakened dead or the souls tormented by the opening of the abyss.
- Open Book: It could represent the Book of Life or divine revelation.
- Solar Eclipse: The sun obscured by the smoke from the well is depicted as an eclipse, accentuating the sense of total darkness.

Interpretation: This image emphasizes the spiritual dimension of divine judgment, with a strong call to redemption and eternal condemnation. The contrast between the luminous angels and the skeletal figures emphasizes the separation between good and evil.

General comment

The two images offer complementary interpretations of the biblical passage:

1. The first focuses on the cosmic and destructive aspect of the event.
2. The second explores the spiritual and moral implications of divine judgment.

Both convey a sense of mystery and terror, in keeping with the apocalyptic tone of the biblical text. The visual representation amplifies the key symbols: the abyss as a place of damnation, the smoke that obscures everything, the angelic intervention and the separation between light and darkness.

The opening of the abyss

The symbolic meaning of the opening of the abyss in Revelation 9:1-2 is rich in theological and spiritual implications, which are linked to themes of judgment, chaos and divine intervention. This event represents a pivotal moment in the book of Revelation, when the power of the forces of evil under God's control is manifested.

Abyss Symbolism

The abyss, or bottomless pit, is a recurring symbol in the Bible and in the Judeo-Christian tradition:

- Abode of the Forces of Evil: The abyss is often associated with the realm of demons and evil spirits. It is a place of darkness and disorder, as opposed to the ordered world created by God. Here reside the fallen angels and the powers of hell (Lk 8:31; Rev 9:1-2).
- Primordial chaos: In the Old Testament, the abyss recalls the primordial waters of chaos before creation (Gen. 1:2). In Revelation 9, the opening of the well represents the temporary return of that destructive chaos in the form of divine judgment.
- Eschatological judgment: The abyss is also a place of punishment for the wicked. Its opening symbolizes the beginning of a divine judgment that strikes those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev 9:4).

The key and the fallen star

- The key: The key to the well is given to a star fallen from heaven, probably an angel (good or evil) commissioned by God. This indicates that the forces of evil also operate under divine permission and serve the fulfillment of God's plan (Rev 9:1). The key then represents temporarily granted authority to open the well.
- The fallen star: The star symbolizes a fallen celestial figure. Some identify him with Satan or a high-ranking evil angel. However, the fact that the key is "given" to him emphasizes that he does not act autonomously but according to the divine plan.

Smoke and blackout

When the abyss is opened, thick smoke rises from the well that obscures the sun and the atmosphere:

- Smoke as a symbol of deception: Smoke represents the spiritual and moral confusion brought by demonic forces. It obscures the light of divine truth, promoting ignorance and error among men.
- Sundarkening: The darkened sun symbolizes the loss of divine light and spiritual knowledge. This event marks a period of great tribulation for humanity.

Theological implications

Divine Sovereignty Over Evil: Although the opening of the abyss appears to release chaotic forces, they operate under God's control. Their power is limited in time and purpose (Rev 9:5).

Selective judgment: Grasshoppers that emerge from the abyss affect only those who do not have God's seal. This highlights God's protection for his elect even in the midst of judgment.

Testing of faith: The opening of the abyss tests the faith of believers, separating the authentic faithful from those who are vulnerable to spiritual deception.

In summary, the opening of the abyss in Revelation 9 symbolizes the temporary manifestation of the forces of evil as part of the divine eschatological plan. It is an event that calls to mind God's sovereign power over chaos and the final judgment, while offering special protection to his faithful.

Smoke in the well

The smoke rising from the abyss pit in Revelation 9:2 is a symbolic image full of meaning, closely linked to the theme of the Apocalypse and divine judgment. This smoke, described as that of a large furnace, obscures the sun and air, evoking destruction, chaos and spiritual obscurcation.

Meaning of smoke in apocalyptic image

Darkening of divine light: Smoke represents the loss of divine light and truth. It obscures the sun and the air, symbols of life and spiritual knowledge, indicating a condition of confusion and deception spread over the earth.

Judgment and destruction: The image of smoke rising from the abyss recalls biblical events such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:28), where smoke was a sign of God's judgment. Here it symbolizes the intensity of divine judgment and the severity of the demonic forces unleashed.

Spread of evil: Smoking is associated with spiritual corruption emerging from the abyss, a place of confinement for evil forces. Its spread represents the negative influence of evil on earth, obscuring the truth and promoting errors and deceptions.

Separation of light and darkness: The image of smoke obscuring the sun emphasizes the contrast between the light of divine salvation and the darkness brought by sin and rebellion against God.

Connection to the overall picture of the Apocalypse

In the apocalyptic vision, smoke is not just an accessory element but a central symbol:

- Manifestation of demonic forces: Smoke anticipates the emergence of "locusts" from the abyss, creatures representing demonic powers charged with tormenting those who are not protected by God's seal.
- Eschatological warning: Smoke acts as a visible sign of the impending divine judgment, reminding men of the need for repentance before it is too late.

The smoke of the abyss pit is a powerful visual metaphor for the spiritual and moral darkness that invades the world when the forces of evil are temporarily unleashed. It represents both divine judgment and the consequence of the rejection of truth, highlighting the contrast between God's saving light and the darkness of sin. In the overall apocalyptic picture, smoking reinforces the sense of urgency and severity of the events described.

Star fallen from the sky

The theological interpretations of the star that fell from heaven in Revelation 9:1 are many and vary according to the biblical context and exegetical tradition. This star is described as a "fallen star" that is given the key to the abyss pit, a crucial role in the apocalyptic narrative. The main interpretations are as follows:

The star as an angelic figure

Most interpreters agree that the fallen star represents a personal being, not a literal star. Especially:

- A fallen angel: Many commentators identify the star with a rebellious angel, perhaps Satan himself, based on parallels such as Luke 10:18 ("I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning") and Revelation 12:9, which describes the fall of Satan and his angels on earth.
- A high-ranking evil angel: Some suggest that the star is a specific fallen angel, distinct from Satan but still in service to evil. This could be the same angel of the abyss mentioned in Revelation 9:11, whose name is "Destroyer" (Abaddon in Hebrew or Apolly in Greek).
- A good angel: Alternatively, some scholars believe that the star may represent an angel loyal to God tasked with opening the abyss pit to fulfill the divine plan. In this vision, the angel acts under God's command to trigger judgment.

The star as a symbol of Satan

The identification of the star with Satan is one of the most common interpretations:

- Fall from heaven: The description of the "fallen" star recalls Satan's rebellion against God and his expulsion from heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18). This image emphasizes the loss of the heavenly position and the degradation of Satan to being confined to the earth.
- Role in judgment: Although fallen and rebellious, Satan acts here as an instrument of divine judgment. The key to the well is "given" to him, indicating that his power is limited and subordinate to the sovereign will of God.

Alternative symbolic interpretations

Some commentators offer less literal interpretations:

- The Word of God: A minority interprets the star as a symbol of the Word of God which, if rejected by man, opens the door to spiritual and moral chaos. However, this view deviates from the more direct meaning of the text.
- An earthly king or political system: In some historical or allegorical readings, the star might represent an earthly leader or an oppressive system that causes spiritual and moral destruction on earth.

Role in the Divine Economy

Regardless of the specific identity of the star, its role is clearly subordinate to the divine plan:

- The key to the abyss well is given to him, highlighting that he does not act independently but by the will of God.
- The opening of the well marks the beginning of an eschatological judgment in which demonic forces are temporarily released to torment men not protected by the seal of God.

The star fallen from heaven is a complex symbol that can represent a fallen angel (perhaps Satan), a good angel appointed by God or a symbolic figure linked to eschatological judgment. His fall symbolizes spiritual degradation and divine intervention in temporarily allowing the forces of evil to act to fulfill the plan of the final judgment.

The Divine Unknown

In the two images inspired by Revelation 9:1-2, the divine unknown is represented through visual symbols that evoke mystery, power and awe. Here's how it's represented:

The Divine Unknown as a Supernatural Power

In both images, the divine unknown is associated with the moment when the fifth angel blows the trumpet, an act that marks the beginning of a transcendent and incomprehensible event for man. The figure of the angel and his gesture of blowing the trumpet represent God's direct intervention in human history, but they do so in an enigmatic way, leaving room for interpretations on the meaning and ultimate purpose of this act.

- In the first image, the sky is dominated by a luminous vortex or a fallen star, symbolizing the manifestation of the divine through extraordinary cosmic events. This calls out the idea that God acts in ways that are beyond human comprehension.

- In the second image, the angel with the trumpet is portrayed as a divine messenger, but his action of opening the abyss well introduces an element of mystery and terror. The divine unknown manifests itself here not only as a source of light or salvation, but also as the judgment and revelation of hidden forces.

Smoking as a symbol of the unknown

The smoke rising from the abyss pit is a key representation of the divine unknown:

- Darkness and mystery: In both images, smoke obscures the sun and the atmosphere, symbolizing the inaccessibility of full divine knowledge. Smoking not only conceals what is visible, but also suggests a hidden and looming reality that defies rational understanding.

- Transition between the divine and the demonic: Smoke acts as a bridge between the divine command (the opening of the well) and the release of demonic forces (the locusts). This dual role emphasizes the ambiguity of divine intervention: while God allows the well to be opened, the contents of the well itself remain dark and terrifying.

The abyss as a symbol of the unknown transcendent

The abyss opened by the fallen star is a powerful image of the divine unknown:

- Unfathomability: The abyss is described as a bottomless pit, a symbol of infinity and the unfathomable mystery of the divine will. It is a place beyond human comprehension, where primordial forces reside under the ultimate control of God.

- Selective judgment: The opening of the abyss does not strike indiscriminately; only those who lack the seal of God are tormented. This aspect reinforces the idea that the divine unknown operates according to criteria that are just but incomprehensible to men.

Contrast between light and darkness

In both images, the divine unknown is represented through a visual contrast between light (the sky or angelic figures) and darkness (smoke and the abyss):

- Light symbolizes the divine presence and partial revelation of God's plan.

- Darkness represents what remains hidden or incomprehensible, evoking fear and reverence.

The divine unknown in the two images is represented as a complex and ambivalent reality. On the one hand, it manifests itself through symbols of supernatural power (the angel with the trumpet, the opening of the abyss); on the other, through obscure and mysterious elements (smoke, the abyss itself), which underline the distance between God and man. This visual representation reflects the central theme of the Apocalypse: the mystery of the divine plan that is progressively revealed through cosmic events and eschatological judgments.

Analysis and Comment:

The verses of this passage catapult us into a universe of symbols and tensions, in which the element of the "fallen star" takes on a deep and polysemic meaning. This star, which falls from the sky, is not only a celestial event, but a sign in which the divine manifests itself in an unpredictable and, at the same time, disturbing form.

- The Symbol of the Fallen Star:

The star, falling from the firmament, represents a power that descends from above to reveal an abyss as inner as it is cosmic. It embodies the contact between the divine and the human, a bridge between what is known and what remains mysterious. His fall is the prelude to a transformation that breaks certainties and invites an experience of radical awakening.

- Negative Theology and the Unknowability of the Divine:

In this context, the text recalls the principles of negative theology, according to which authentic knowledge of God cannot be achieved through reassuring images or definitions, but only through the acceptance of mystery and darkness. The well of the Abyss, opened by the star, symbolizes just that: a place where the rules of the ordinary world dissolve, leaving room for a reality that escapes human rationality. It is in the confrontation with this emptiness that the human being can, paradoxically, begin a path of awakening and transformation.

- The Abyss Open: Catastrophe and Awakening:

The act of opening the well not only marks the beginning of an impending catastrophe, but also represents an invitation to plunge into the depths of the unknown. This openness is ambivalent: on the one hand, it heralds chaos and destruction, on the other, it offers the opportunity to abandon old certainties to embrace a new awareness. The risk and threat inherent in this gesture are thus transformed into the seed of an inner awakening, where contact with the ineffable becomes the way to a spiritual rebirth.

In summary, the first verses of chapter 9 of the Book of Revelation invite us to look beyond the veil of the usual, to accept the presence of darkness as the bearer of hidden truths. The fallen star and the opening of the abyss are not mere images of destruction, but the symbol of a radical transformation: an invitation to recognize that, even in times of crisis, the power of the invisible can awaken our ability to transcend the everyday and embrace the mystery.

2. Revelation 9:3-6 – The Locusts and the Theology of Pain

Biblical text:

3 Out of the smoke came locusts to the earth and were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth. 4 And they were told not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any vegetable, nor any tree, but only men who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 It was granted to them, not to kill them, but to torment them for five months. and the torment they caused was similar to that produced by the scorpion when it stings a man. 6 In those days men will seek death, but they will not find it; they will long to die, but death will flee from them.

The following four images represent a visual interpretation of the verses of Revelation 9:3-6, which describe locusts as a symbol of divine judgment and temporary torment. Each image seems to evoke symbolic and theological elements of the biblical text, emphasizing pain and chaos without total destruction. Below is a detailed analysis:

First image



The scene shows a surreal landscape in which multicolored clouds emerge from the sky that turn into frightening and menacing faces. These faces seem to embody locusts, terrifying creatures that bring torment. Their "non-destructive" nature is represented by the lack of total devastation in the landscape below, which still appears intact but disturbing. The river that runs through the scene could symbolize the flow of life, which continues despite divine judgment.

Second image



Here the attention shifts to a terrain teeming with monstrous and deformed creatures. Locusts are depicted as grotesque and amorphous beings, with vivid colors that create a contrast between chaos and vitality. In the background, angelic or demonic figures seem to observe from above, suggesting a spiritual dimension of judgment. This image amplifies the idea of targeted torment: humanity is immersed in a landscape infested with entities that do not destroy but inflict suffering.

Third image



A dark vortex dominates the sky, in the center of which emerges a monstrous figure with bright eyes and gaping jaws. This depiction may allude to the smoke from which locusts emerge in the biblical text. The desert landscape is littered with mushrooms and disturbing organic shapes, symbols of a nature corrupted or altered by divine judgment. The presence of flying and terrestrial creatures reinforces the idea of omnipresent torment.

Fourth image



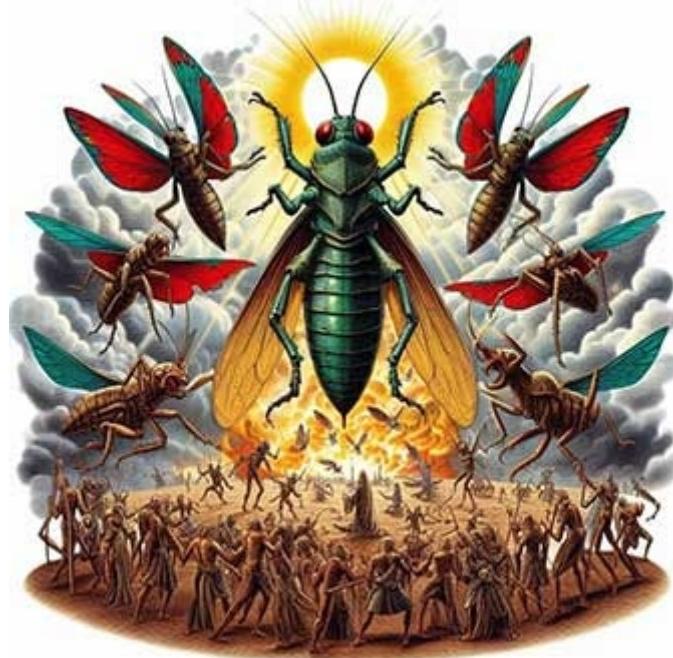
The last image features a huge skeletal figure with glowing eyes towering over an alien landscape. The central river, which flows through a terrain populated by monstrous shapes, again recalls the concept of life that persists despite judgment. The organic spheres and structures scattered throughout the landscape suggest the fragility of the human condition in the face of incomprehensible forces.

These images visually translate the central theme of the verses: locusts as instruments of divine judgment inflict temporary suffering to shake the human soul and question its earthly certainties. Their purpose is not to destroy but to bring awareness through pain. The vivid depiction of locusts as deformed and disturbing beings emphasizes the spiritual nature of the torment: it is not just a physical punishment, but a reminder of divine reality.

In summary, these works powerfully capture the apocalyptic essence of the biblical text, visually exploring the tension between judgment, suffering, and hope in the continuity of life.

The locusts

The Symbolic Meaning of Locusts in Revelation: Divine Judgment and Cleansing Torment



The locusts described in the ninth chapter of Revelation represent one of the most intricate and theologically dense symbols of the entire Johannine corpus. This study analyzes their role as instruments of divine judgment, exploring the spiritual, anthropological and eschatological dimensions of the biblical text through an intertextual and historical-critical analysis.

Exegetical context of the apocalyptic passage

The narrative structure of Revelation 9

The ninth chapter of Revelation is placed in the context of the seven trumpets, precisely between the fifth and sixth, constituting a turning point in the revelation of divine judgments. The description of locusts emerges from an apocalyptic atmosphere characterized by cosmic elements: a star fallen from the sky, the

smoke of the abyss, and the darkness that envelops creation. This scenario is not a mere narrative background, but actively participates in the symbolic construction, where primordial chaos is re-actualized in a judicial function.

Physical characteristics and zoological anomalies

Apocalyptic locusts escape any entomological classification, presenting a hybrid nature that blends human ("human faces"), animals ("dandelions"), and angelic ("golden crowns") traits. Their description in Revelation 9:7-11 deliberately breaks the boundaries of natural categories, creating a liminal being who embodies the disturbance of the created order. The wings "like the roar of war chariots" transform their flight into an echo of Ezekiel's divine chariot, now distorted into a destructive function.

Locust Theological Symbolism

Selective Judging Tool

Unlike the locusts of the Exodus that strike indiscriminately, the apocalyptic ones make a metaphysical selection: "Do not harm the grass ... but only men who do not bear the seal of God." This seal, recalling the priestly tablet of Exodus 28:36-38 (The diadem of holiness:36 "And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and upon it thou shalt engrave, as one engraves on a seal, Holy be to the LORD. 37 And thou shalt fasten it with a purplish ribbon upon the turban, and it shall stand on the front of it. 38 He will stand on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron will bear the sins committed by the children of Israel in the holy things that they consecrate, in every kind of holy offering; it will always stand on his forehead, to make them pleasing in the presence of the Lord.), becomes the eschatological criterion of belonging to the People of God. The locusts thus embody the principle of divine discrimination, where judgment is not blind punishment but an act of differentiated justice.

Torment as divine pedagogy

The time limit ("five months") and the impossibility of death transform torment into a pedagogical device. The pain inflicted does not aim at annihilation but at conversion: "a reminder of divine reality through suffering". This mechanism finds parallels in the rabbinic concept of sufferings of love, where existential discomfort becomes an instrument of spiritual purification.

Eschatological and cosmological dimensions

The abyss as liminal space

The origin of the locusts from the "abyss pit" places their action in the theological space of the primordial waters that in the Jewish cosmogony represent pre-creational chaos. The reopening of this abyss signals a cosmic regression, where the forces of disorder are temporarily unleashed to serve providential design.

Satan as a Subordinate Agent

The figure of the "fallen star", identified with Abbadon/Apollyon, reveals the theological paradox whereby Satan becomes an unwitting instrument of divine justice. This mechanism has precedents in the book of Job (1:6-12) - Job Accused by Satan: 6 One day the children of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where do you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "By walking in the earth and walking in it." 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no other on earth who is upright, upright, fears God and shuns evil like him." 9 Satan answered the LORD, "Is it for nothing that Job fears God? 10 Have you not surrounded him with shelter, him, his house, and all that he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his cattle cover the whole land. 11 But stretch out your hand a little, touch what he has, and see if he does not deny you to your face." 12 The LORD said to Satan, "All that he has is in your power; only, do not stretch out your hand on his person". And Satan

withdrew from the presence of the LORD, where Satan works within the limits set by God. - Locusts, while demonic emanations, act under strict sovereign control.

Historical interpretations and actualization

The historical-allegorical reading

Some commentators have identified locusts with the Roman army, seeing in the "golden crowns" a reference to legionary insignia. This historicizing hermeneutic finds support in the parallelism between the "five months" of torment and the typical duration of ancient military campaigns. However, such an interpretation risks reducing the universal scope of the apocalyptic symbol.

Contemporary applications

In the modern era, locusts can be reinterpreted as a symbol of the disruptive forces of postmodernity: from existential nihilism to technological dependencies. Their inability to kill reflects the condition of contemporary man, oppressed by metaphysical anxieties and desperately looking for meaning.

Anthropological implications

Suffering as a mirror of the soul

The torment inflicted by the locusts operates an existential synecdoche: by affecting "only men", they reveal the vulnerability of the human being devoid of transcendent anchorage. The search for death that "flees" becomes an emblem of the Heideggerian condition of being-thrown, where man experiences the impossibility of absolute self-determination.

The body as a battlefield

The anatomical description of locusts ("iron pectorals", "scorpion tails") transforms the human body into a theater of spiritual conflict. Each physical part is associated with an aspect of the eschatological struggle:

- Women's hair: seduction and deception
- Lion's teeth: primordial violence
- Scorpion tails: moral poison

This militarization of the body anticipates contemporary concepts of biopolitics, where the individual becomes the target of suprapersonal powers.

Theological conclusions

The locusts of the Apocalypse represent a complex theological device, summarizing in themselves:

1. Divine sovereignty over evil
2. The pedagogical nature of suffering
3. The urgent call to conversion

Their action delimits an existential space where man is forced to confront his own finiteness and the need for the transcendent. In this sense, locusts are not mere instruments of punishment, but true "angels of the abyss" whose ultimate task is to reconcile creation with the Creator through the purifying fire of pain.

Theology of pain and locusts

The Theology of Pain and the Locusts of the Apocalypse: An Analysis of Divine Judgment as a Means of Purification



The connection between the locusts of the Apocalypse and the "theology of pain" emerges as a central theme for understanding the spiritual dynamism of divine judgment. These creatures, described in Revelation 9:3-6, do not act as mere destructive forces, but as instruments of calibrated suffering, aimed at revealing the fragility of human certainties and reorienting man towards the transcendent.

The role of locusts in the economy of apocalyptic judgment

Origin and nature of locusts: symbolism of the abyss

The locusts emerge from the "pit of the abyss" (Rev 9:2), a detail that places them in a theological space of transition between primordial chaos and created order. The black smoke that precedes their appearance represents the moral and spiritual corruption that saturates human society. This darkness is not simply the absence of light, but an active principle of existential disorientation, where truth becomes indistinguishable from falsehood.

Their hybrid morphology – a combination of human, animal and demonic traits – reflects a distortion of the natural order, signalling the invasion of the sacred into the profane. The wings "like the roar of war chariots" transform their movement into an echo of Ezekiel's divine chariot, now bent for judicial purposes.

The time limitation: five months of torment

The predetermined duration of the torment ("five months") introduces a theological paradox: although the locusts act as agents of Satan ("Apollyon," Rev 9:11), their action is circumscribed by divine sovereignty. This time interval, corresponding to the life cycle of the royal locusts, symbolizes the perfection of divine control over evil as well. The suffering inflicted is not eternal but pedagogical, aimed at provoking an existential crisis rather than annihilation.

The Theology of Pain: Endurance and Conversion

Pain as a divine language

In the apocalyptic perspective, the pain caused by locusts takes on a revelatory function. The Apocalypse is not a catalog of catastrophes, but a "removal of the veil" on spiritual reality. The stings of locusts – which affect "only men who do not bear the seal of God" (Rev 9:4) – become a living exegesis of the human condition: man, deprived of the divine seal, is vulnerable to the forces of chaos.

This physical torment ("they will desire to die, but death shall flee from them," Rev 9:6) translates into corporal terms the anguish described in Ecclesiastes 3:11 (God has made all things beautiful in his time: he has even put the thought of eternity in their hearts, although man cannot understand from beginning to end the work that God has done.): the existential "emptiness" of those who seek meaning outside of God. The theology of pain emerges here not as divine sadism, but as an extreme attempt to awaken the spiritual conscience through the destabilization of worldly securities.

The purifying function of pain

Locusts strike the body to reach the soul. Their warlike characteristics ("iron pectorals", "scorpion tails") militarize suffering, transforming each individual into an eschatological battlefield. This approach finds parallels in the Jewish concept of "sufferings of love", where pain is seen as an educational tool to bring man back to God, apocalyptic pain contains within itself the seeds of regeneration. Suffering, in this perspective, is not an end in itself, but part of a dialectical process that leads to the awareness of ontological dependence on the Creator.

Connections with theodicy and Christian anthropology

The Problem of Evil and Divine Sovereignty

The theology of pain in the Book of Revelation deals with the classic paradox of theodicy: how to reconcile a good God with the existence of suffering? The Johannine answer is radical: Satan and his locusts are unwitting instruments of the divine plan. As Job 1:6-12 demonstrates, evil operates within God-given limits, becoming an unwitting co-worker with the highest good.

This paradox reaches its climax in the description of locusts as an organized "army" (Rev 9:7-9). Their military discipline contrasts with the chaos they are supposed to represent, revealing a theological irony: even destructive forces testify to the immanent order of the cosmos.

The Anthropology of Vulnerability

The locusts unmask the ontological fragility of man without God. Their selective target ("only men") highlights how humanity, deprived of the divine seal, is exposed to forces that exceed its comprehension: man experiences his own finiteness as an inescapable condition.

The theology of pain in the Book of Revelation transforms this existential anguish into opportunity: by recognizing his own vulnerability, man is impelled to seek refuge in the transcendent. The locusts, in this sense, become "existential teachers" who, through torment, teach humility.

Contemporary implications: from text to practice

Pain as a cultural diagnosis

In the postmodern era, locusts can be reinterpreted as metaphors for the disruptive forces of society: nihilism, technological alienation, identity crises. Their inability to kill mirrors the condition of modern man, oppressed by an "existential pain" that leads not to physical death but to spiritual atrophy.

The theology of pain offers a hermeneutical key here: just as ancient locusts stung bodies, so contemporary crises prod consciences, inviting an examination of reality. Social, economic or environmental hardship becomes a potential opportune moment for a collective conversion.

Conclusions: towards an apocalyptic theology of pain

The locusts of the Apocalypse reveal a theology of pain articulated on three axes:

1. Teleology: Suffering has a precise purpose in the salvific plan, acting as a spiritual corrective.
2. Limitation: Pain is always circumscribed in time and intensity, testifying to divine mercy.
3. Transformation: Physical and existential torment can become a catalyst for spiritual growth, as long as it receives a reading in the light of Revelation.

In the final analysis, these hybrid creatures – as repulsive as they are necessary – embody the central paradox of Christianity: the Cross, an instrument of torture, becomes the way of salvation. Just as Christ's pain redeems humanity, so the torment of locusts, if interpreted in faith, can lead to an existential resurrection.

Temporary Divine Judgment and Locusts

The Locusts of the Apocalypse as Temporary Divine Judgment: Tools of Purifying Torment



The locusts described in Revelation 9:3-6 embody a divine judgment unique in its temporary, pedagogical nature. Unlike the destructive plagues of the Old Testament, these hybrid creatures operate calibrated suffering, designed not to annihilate but to shake human consciousness. Their action is placed in the context of the seven apocalyptic trumpets, revealing a complex theological design that combines divine sovereignty, mercy and the call to conversion.

The Symbolic Picture of Locusts: Anatomy of Limited Judgment

Origin from the abyss and sovereign control

Locusts emerge from the "bottomless pit" (Rev 9:2), a cosmic space associated with primordial chaos in Jewish tradition. This detail does not simply indicate a geographical origin, but an irruption of pre-creational disorder into the ordered world. However, Satan – the "fallen star" – receives the key to the abyss only by divine permission. Locusts, while being demonic instruments, act within God-given limits:

- Definite duration: Five months, corresponding to the life cycle of royal locusts (Rev 9:5), symbolize the chronological precision of divine control.
- Selective target: They only target "men who do not bear the seal of God" (Rev 9:4), revealing eschatological discrimination based on spiritual belonging[2].

Hybrid morphology and theological significance

The description of locusts blends natural and supernatural elements:

- Human faces: They represent the evil intelligence behind the torment, demonic counterfeit of the divine image.
- Dandelions and scorpion tails: They symbolize a primordial violence (lion) combined with a subtle venom (scorpion), a combination that affects body and soul.
- Iron Breastplates: Allude to a false invincibility, a parody of the armor of faith.

This hybridization transforms locusts into living metaphors for spiritual corruption: creatures that should belong to the natural order become carriers of supernatural disorder.

The temporality of judgment: conversion mechanism

Suffering as kairos

The torment inflicted by the locusts – painful but not lethal – mirrors the biblical dialectic between justice and mercy. The five months of suffering correspond to the period necessary for a hardened heart to open to repentance. The original Greek text uses the term basanizo ($\betaασανίζω$), which indicates not only physical pain but a process of "trial" or "refinement."

This dynamic finds parallels in the Old Testament concept of yissurim (discipline, Proverbs 3:11-12), where pain is an educational tool. The locusts thus perform a "spiritual surgery": they remove false securities (wealth, power, idolatry) to expose man's existential nakedness before God.

The paradox of impossible death

"They desired to die, but death fled from them" (Rev 9:6). This verse reveals the essence of temporary judgment:

Revelation of human self-sufficiency as an illusion: The inability to control even one's own death unmasks ontological fragility.

Implicit invitation to surrender: The flight of death forces us to confront life and its ultimate questions.

As observed in contemporary reflection, this condition reflects postmodern existential anguish, where man is tormented by metaphysical anxieties without finding a way out.

Eschatological and anthropological dimensions

Satan as an unwitting instrument

The figure of Abaddon/Apollyon (Rev 9:11) – "destroyer" in Hebrew and Greek – embodies the paradox whereby evil becomes an involuntary collaborator of good. Although he is king of the locusts, his power derives entirely from divine permission. This mechanism has antecedents in Job, where Satan acts within the limits set by God.

The body as spiritual theater

Locusts transform the human body into an eschatological battlefield:

- Female hair: Symbol of seduction and vanity (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:15: While if a woman wears hair, it is an honor to her; because hair is given to her as an ornament.), they attack pride and self-satisfaction.
- Sounds of war chariots: They recall the merkavah, the chariot-throne of God of Ezekiel, but in a distorted form, a demonic counterfeit of divine glory.
- Golden crowns: Parody of Christ's kingly authority (Rev 14:14: And I looked and saw a white cloud; and on the cloud sat one, like a son of man, who had a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.), they express the human claim to self-deification.

This multisensory assault (visual, auditory, tactile) represents a total invasion of the person, aimed at dismantling any residual illusion of self-sufficiency.

Updating the symbol

Locusts as contemporary metaphors

In postmodern society, locusts can be interpreted as:

- Existential crises: Depression, alienation, addictions that torment without killing.
- Ecological disasters: Climate change that affects humanity as a consequence of technological hubris.
- Geopolitical conflicts: "limit" wars that destabilize without resolving, prompting ethical questions.

In any case, the pain inflicted – if read in the light of Revelation – maintains a redemptive function: it forces us to leave spiritual apathy and to seek transcendent meanings.

Conclusion: The Pedagogy of Temporary Pain

Apocalyptic locusts reveal a dynamic theodicy where:

Suffering is teleological: Oriented to a precise purpose in the salvific plan.

Evil is subordinated to good: Satan and his hosts become unconscious instruments of divine pedagogy.

Temporality testifies to mercy: The chronological limits ("five months") prevent the judgment from degenerating into pure destruction.

In the final analysis, this temporary judgment anticipates the Pauline principle that God "wills all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). The locusts, in their horrible grandeur, thus become paradoxical heralds of hope: their torment is a promise that pain does not have the last word, but serves to lead humanity to the threshold of redemption.

False human certainties and locusts

The relationship between the locusts of the Apocalypse and false human certainties is articulated on different symbolic and theological levels. The locusts represent a temporary divine judgment, designed to shake the foundations of worldly securities and reveal the fragility of human existence devoid of transcendent references.



Locust symbolism and destabilization of certainties

Destabilization of the natural order

The locusts emerge from the "pit of the bottomless" (Rev 9:2), a space associated with primordial chaos. This origin symbolizes the invasion of disorder in the orderly world, destabilizing human expectations of control over nature. Their action, limited in time ("five months"), highlights the divine sovereignty over evil and suffering, emphasizing that even the most apparently chaotic forces are instruments of the divine plan.

Blow to material security

In the biblical context, locusts are associated with agricultural devastation and famine (Exodus 10, Joel 1-2). This theme is repeated in Revelation, where locusts strike only humans without God's seal, leaving vegetation intact (Rev 9:4). This distinction symbolizes how divine judgment is not only a physical punishment, but an attack on man's false material and spiritual securities. The locusts reveal that true security does not lie in earthly possessions but in faith and spiritual belonging.

Theological and anthropological implications

Theology of Judgment and Mercy

The judgment of the locusts is part of a larger theological design that combines justice and mercy. The temporal limitation and the selection of targets reveal a divine pedagogy that aims to correct rather than destroy. This theological approach emphasizes how pain and suffering can be instruments of spiritual purification, inviting man to reconsider his priorities and to seek a deeper security in faith.

Anthropology of vulnerability

Locusts, striking only men without the seal of God, expose the ontological fragility of human existence. This action symbolizes how man, deprived of a transcendent reference, is exposed to forces that exceed his understanding and control. The theology of pain represented here transforms suffering into an opportunity for spiritual growth, pushing man to seek refuge in the transcendent and to recognize the precariousness of his worldly certainties.

Conclusion: The challenge to human certainties

In summary, the locusts of the Apocalypse represent a divine judgment that shakes false human certainties, revealing the fragility of existence devoid of a spiritual anchor. Through their symbolic action, they invite man to reconsider his priorities and to seek a deeper security in faith, overcoming the illusions of self-sufficiency and total control over reality.

Description of locusts

In the context of Revelation, locusts are described as monstrous, symbolic creatures that emerge from "the bottom of the bottomless" (Rev 9:2-3). These are not ordinary locusts, but hybrid beings with human, animal, and demonic traits, designed to represent temporary and selective divine judgment.



Physical and symbolic description

The locusts of the Apocalypse are described with characteristics that make them unique and terrifying:

- Faces as human faces: They emphasize the evil intelligence behind the torment.
- Hair like woman's hair: It symbolizes seduction and deception.
- Teeth like dandelions: They represent primordial violence.
- Breastplates as iron breastplates: They indicate a false invincibility, a parody of the breastplate of faith.
- Golden Crowns: They are a parody of Christ's royal authority, expressing the human claim to self-deification.

Power and purpose

Locusts have the power to torment men without the seal of God, but not to kill them. Their sting, similar to that of scorpions, causes intense but not deadly pain, lasting for five months (Rev 9:5-6). This torment is described as an agony that makes one desire death, but death "will flee from them" (Rev 9:6).

Theological symbolism

Locusts represent a divine judgment that selectively strikes humans without God's seal, leaving vegetation intact (Rev 9:4). This symbolizes the distinction between those who belong spiritually to God and those who do not. Their power is limited in time and nature, emphasizing divine sovereignty even over evil.

Eschatological interpretation

Locusts are seen as a sign of the end times and the impending final judgment. Their appearance is a divine warning that precedes further calamities (Rev 9:1-12). In this context, they represent a spiritual destructive force that operates as an instrument of divine judgment, while being controlled by God's sovereignty.

Analysis and Commentary:

Locusts as a symbol of judgment and torment that does not destroy, but inflicts temporary suffering. In this passage, the image of locusts emerges from the smoke as a horde of tormenting beings, not aimed at destroying all life, but at targeting the soul and body of man. These creatures, evoked with force and violence, embody divine judgment and pain, but their purpose is not to completely erase life: it is a temporary torment, designed to shake the foundations of false human certainties.

- The Symbol of Judgment and Torment:

Negative theology and pain: suffering as a way to unhinge man's false certainties; the divine remains hidden, but it is perceived in the experience of the limit.

Locusts, which sprang from smoke, symbolize a form of punishment that acts selectively. They do not affect nature in itself, but focus on men, a sign that divine judgment is addressed to the one who created, in some ways, the illusions of his existence. The suffering inflicted thus becomes a means of awakening an inner awareness, an invitation to confront human limitations.

- The Power of the Invisible:

The dark forces manifest themselves violently, but reveal the existence of a higher order.

The violent appearance of locusts represents the manifestation of dark and invisible forces, which although perceived only through their destructive effect, indicate the existence of a higher order. This power, which acts beyond ordinary logic, reminds us that behind the apparent chaos reigns a mysterious and inescapable cosmic law, capable of transforming pain into a powerful catalyst for renewal.

- Negative Theology and the Way of Pain:

Suffering, as presented in this passage, is configured as a means to demolish illusions and the pillars of human security. Negative theology teaches that the divine, in its ineffable essence, is not revealed through consolatory images, but is manifested in the experience of limitation, in the pain that pushes man to recognize his own fragility. It is precisely through this pain that the individual is invited to renounce false certainties and to open himself to the mystery, thus approaching a more authentic and profound form of knowledge.

Ultimately, the passage of the locusts is not only an evocation of destruction: it is an invitation to understand that, in pain and suffering, the seed of an inner transformation is hidden. The forces that act in the shadows push us to overcome our limited vision of the world, to embrace a path of awakening that transforms torment into a means of approaching the divine.

3. Revelation 9:7-12 – The Symbolism of the Locusts: The Restlessness of the Invisible

Biblical text:

7 The appearance of grasshoppers was like horses ready for war. On their heads they had like golden crowns, and their faces were like the faces of a man. 8 And they had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like dandelions. 9 Their chests were like an iron breastplate, and the sound of their wings was like that of chariots drawn by many horses running to battle. 10 They had tails and stingers like those of scorpions, and in the tails lay their power to harm men for five months. 11 Their king was the angel of the deep, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollion. 12 The first "trouble" has passed; Well, there are two more "troubles" after these things.

The following three images depict the locusts described in Revelation 9:7-12. These creatures look like battle-ready horses, with human-like faces, long hair like women's, sharp teeth like lions, and golden armor. Their wings produce a deafening roar, similar to the sound of horse-drawn carts in motion. They have scorpion-like tails, armed with stingers with which they torment humanity. In the background, an infernal landscape shrouded in black smoke rising from an abyss, while the sky is tinged with blood red. Dramatic lights and intense shadows accentuate the sense of terror and mystery.

First image (color)



- In the foreground are creatures similar to black horses, with powerful musculature, galloping through a gloomy and apocalyptic landscape.
- Each of these "horses" has disturbing features, with manes moved by a sinister wind and details that suggest unnatural hybridizations (such as tails or scorpion parts).
- In the foreground, on the right, you can see a gigantic scorpion creature, with claws that resemble those of a lobster or crab, and a tail ready to strike.
- The background is dominated by dark tones, with a night sky and a full moon illuminating a terrain littered with skeletal remains, smoke and rubble.
- The overall atmosphere is one of strong tension, accentuated by the use of cold and gloomy colors, which convey the feeling of a world in ruins.

Second image (black and white/grayscale)



IN APOCALISSE 9..7. 7-12

- A majestic dragon or armored serpent dominates the center, with intricate decorations that run along its entire body. The scales and ornaments suggest a supernatural and imposing being.
- On the right, standing, we can see a human figure wrapped in a cloak or a long robe (perhaps a prophet or John himself, the author of the Apocalypse), who observes the scene with a solemn or prophetic attitude.
- In the background appear other typical elements of apocalyptic iconography: horses, a large bird of prey that ploughs through the stormy sky, scorpions, rocky landscapes and a fortified city in the distance.
- Engraving or pencil drawing emphasizes the contrast between light and shadow, giving it a dramatic and almost visionary aura.
- At the bottom we read the words "Revelation 9:7-12", to underline the direct reference to the biblical text.

Third image



- It features further variations or developments of the hybrid and monstrous figures described in Revelation 9, taking up the same dreamlike and menacing style: horses with scorpion tails, details of armor, humanoid faces, or other celestial or infernal creatures.
- The idea of an infernal "army" invading the earth is insisted upon, maintaining consistency with the apocalyptic imagery of chapter 9.

Symbolic analysis and biblical references

In chapter 9 of Revelation, the "locusts" that come out of the abyss pit are described with a series of hybrid and terrifying traits:

- "They looked like horses ready for war" (v. 7)
- "On their heads they had crowns" (v. 7)
- "Their faces were like the faces of men" (v. 7)
- "They had hair like women's hair and teeth like dandelions" (v. 8)
- "They had breastplates like breastplates of iron" (v. 9)
- "Their wings made a noise like chariots drawn by many horses running to battle" (v. 9)
- "They had tails and stingers like those of scorpions" (v. 10)

These apocalyptic creatures are not "normal locusts", but symbols of demonic and destructive forces that, despite having devastating power, act with a divine permission limited in time (five months of torment, according to the text). The images we are looking at rework and amplify this biblical description, showing us:

- Animal hybridization: horses, scorpions, dragons, birds of prey – a mixture of traits that evokes war power (horse), sneaky and poisonous danger (scorpion), supernatural dimension (dragon or ancient snake), and threat from above (birds of prey).

- Landscapes of devastation: arid lands, dark skies, full moon highlighting desolation and the sense of the end of the world.

- "Prophetic vision" atmosphere: the presence of a prophet or a seer (in the second image) refers directly to John's experience in the Apocalypse, who receives revelations through grandiose and often disturbing visions.

Comment and key to interpretation: "The Disquiet of the Invisible"

The subtitle "The Symbolism of the Locusts: The Disquiet of the Invisible" highlights how these representations serve to:

Giving shape to the invisible: The demonic or spiritual forces of which the Apocalypse speaks are not normally visible; art translates them into powerful images, capable of arousing fear and amazement. In this way, the "invisible" becomes "perceptible" through monstrous symbols and figures.

Highlight the power of evil and its limitation: Although frightening and destructive, the "locusts" of the Apocalypse act at a definite time (Rev 9:5) and under a higher judgment. The illustrations charge the scene with drama, but still refer to the idea that the origin and end of evil are contained in a larger design.

Generate a sense of disquiet and urgency: The depiction of bizarre and terrifying creatures wants to strike the imagination, shake the reader/viewer and push him to reflect on the deep meaning of the vision: the presence of spiritual powers operating in human history.

Recalling medieval and modern apocalyptic imagery: The plates are reminiscent of both medieval and Renaissance engravings (for the second image in particular), as well as contemporary dark fantasy (the first color image). This mixture of styles shows the perenniarity of the apocalyptic theme, which crosses the centuries and is updated with new forms of expression.

Conclusions

The three images, despite the stylistic diversity (one more pictorial and "fantasy", the other closer to traditional black and white engravings), share the goal of visualizing the horror and majesty of chapter 9 of the Apocalypse, in which the locusts-scorpion-horse embody the demonic threat and the imminent judgment. The title of the section, "The Disquiet of the Invisible", summarizes the tension between what normally escapes the human gaze (the spiritual world, its conflicts, its creatures) and the need to represent it in forms that strike the conscience and the imagination.

Ultimately, these images invite us to reflect on:

- The power of the symbol: how the artistic image can convey, in an immediate way, a complex theological and spiritual message.
- The dynamics of judgment and hope: as frightening as they are, apocalyptic visions carry with them the idea of a providential plan that, even through trials and tribulations, leads to an outcome of renewal and salvation.
- The power of the invisible: the images remind us that, according to the sacred text, there is an active and influential spiritual reality, which the Apocalypse seeks to reveal and which art tries to show in all its disturbing grandeur.

In summary, each of the three visual representations captures a different aspect of John's vision in Revelation 9, focusing on the fusion of animal and human traits, the devastation of the landscape and the eruption of an "invisible" dense with threat. The overall effect is that of a warning, but also of a reminder of the power of the divine which, while temporarily allowing the action of these forces, controls and delimits their effectiveness.

Analysis and Comment:

In these verses, the vision of locusts is transformed into an apocalyptic representation of monstrous hybrids, creatures that seem to defy all common classification. Locusts, in fact, are not simple insects: they blend natural features with infernal elements, taking on a form that evokes both the strength of wild animals and the horror of an otherworldly realm.

- Terror Hybrids:

The description of locusts, with their resemblance to marching horses and sharp teeth like those of lions, creates a vivid and disturbing picture. These beings seem to embody a reality in which the natural and the supernatural are intertwined, breaking the barriers between the visible and the occult worlds. This fusion of natural and infernal elements represents a powerful symbol: the established order is subverted by forces that cannot be easily cataloged or understood.

- Apocalyptic Awakening:

The horror aroused by these figures is precisely the instrument through which human conscience is shaken. The appearance of such entities destabilizes the sense of security and lingers the observer to a deep awakening, an opening to transcendent dimensions. It is as if terror itself, instead of limiting itself to destroying, invites the individual to cross the boundary of the known to embrace a vaster and more mysterious reality.

- Negative Theology and Ineffability of the Divine:

The indefinable nature of these creatures aligns perfectly with the principles of negative theology, which teaches that the divine transcends all human images and definitions. Locusts, due to their unusual and shocking shape, underline the impossibility of fully grasping the mystery of the sacred through pre-established categories or symbols. They remain, by their very nature, ambiguous and elusive, just like the idea of a God who reveals himself only through the ineffable.

- The "King" of the Locusts – Abaddon (or Apollion):

At the center of this disturbing vision stands the figure of the "king" of the locusts, identifiable with Abaddon or Apollion. He personifies not only the destructive power, but also the role of an instrument of revelation. His presence is a reminder that behind the façade of destruction lies a higher logic: that of judgment and purification, a process in which the disintegration of the old order paves the way for a new understanding of the divine.

In summary, verses 7-12 of the Apocalypse offer us a complex and layered image, in which the symbolism of locusts becomes the emblem of the restlessness of the invisible. Through their appearance, an invitation is manifested to look beyond the surface of terror, discovering in it the seed of a spiritual awakening that, even in moments of destruction, leads to a deeper and more transformative revelation.

4. Revelation 9:13-15 – The Sixth Trumpet and the Order of Judgment

Biblical text:

13 Then the sixth angel blew the trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that was before God. 14 The voice said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Untie the four angels who are bound on the great river Euphrates." 15 And the four angels were loosed, who had been prepared for that hour, and that day, and that month, and that year, to kill the third part of men.

The following three images represent a visual journey through biblical and apocalyptic symbolism. Each illustration is distinguished by its ability to translate the powerful metaphors of divine judgment into art, enriched with details that evoke the majesty and terror of the sacred text. Below, a description, analysis and comment for each image.

First Image: The Angel of the Sixth Trumpet and the Apocalyptic Army



The first image is a dramatic representation of the Sixth Trumpet. In the background, a stormy sky pierced by a central divine light, from which the angel emerges playing a golden trumpet. Waves of celestial energy emanate from the sound, radiating divine power. On either side of the scene, four angels chained along the Euphrates River appear with solemn expressions, ready to be freed. In the foreground, an army of apocalyptic knights in flaming armor advance on horses with fiery manes, wreaking havoc in flames and ashes.

Analysis

The image captures with great intensity the symbolism of Revelation 9:13-15:

- Divine Light and Golden Trumpet: The central light represents the divine presence and power of judgment. The golden trumpet recalls the golden altar mentioned in the biblical text (Rev 9:13), a symbol of divine intercession and justice. Waves of celestial energy visualize the transformative effect of sacred sound.

- The Four Chained Angels: Their location along the Euphrates River symbolizes the boundary between divine order and human chaos. The chains allude to the temporary limitation of destructive forces, which are released to execute divine judgment.

- The Apocalyptic Army: Knights with flaming armor and fiery steeds embody the devastation described in the sacred text (Rev 9:16-19). The contrast between fire and ash recalls purification through destruction, while the dark shadows underline the atmosphere of divine terror.

This illustration is a visual explosion of divine power and eschatological terror. The color choice – gold, fiery red and black – amplifies the contrast between divine light and earthly darkness. The image invites the viewer to reflect on the gravity of divine judgment and the impact of the invisible forces that govern the universe.

Second Image: The Liberated Angels and the Sacred Scrolls



The second image introduces new biblical elements: floating sacred scrolls with divine inscriptions and a heavenly throne in the distance. The trumpet angel dominates the scene in the center, surrounded by a golden light that radiates symbolic inscriptions. The liberated angels descend in columns of light towards an army of knights marching on a fractured ground that separates heaven and hell.

This representation deepens the liturgical and prophetic aspect of the judgment:

- Sacred Scrolls: The floating scrolls symbolize the written, eternal, and executive divine word. They represent the connection between the heavenly throne (divine government) and earthly events.

- Pillars of Light: The liberated angels descend through luminous beams that recall the purification or transmission of the divine will. This detail emphasizes the role of angels as instruments of heavenly justice.

- Celestial Throne: Although distant, the celestial throne serves as a theological focal point, reminding us that every apocalyptic action is orchestrated by divine sovereignty.

The addition of the sacred scrolls enriches the image with a sense of divine order in the apocalyptic chaos. The contrast between the pillars of light (symbol of hope) and the fractured ground (sign of destruction) highlights the duality of judgment: punishment for the wicked but redemption for the righteous.

Third Image: Prophetic Vision with Celestial Book



The third image culminates with a cosmic vision that includes sacred scrolls, a central divine throne, and a large open book that glows with celestial light in the starry sky. The trumpet angel is surrounded by colossal angelic figures, while falling meteors and distant galaxies enrich the prophetic background. In the foreground, apocalyptic knights advance on a terrain broken by fiery abysses.

This scene blends biblical symbolism with cosmological elements:

- Heavenly Book: The open book symbolizes total divine knowledge, the record of human works (Rev 20:12: And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. The books were opened, and another book was also opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by the things written in the books, according to their works.) and the final execution of the judgment. Its light radiates hope but also inevitability.

- Cosmological Vision: Falling meteors represent the signs of the end times (Rev 6:13: the stars of heaven fell to earth as when a fig tree shaken by a strong wind drops its immature figs.), while galaxies suggest that judgment involves not only the Earth but the entire created cosmos.

- Colossal Angelic Figures: Giant angels embody the majesty of the invisible power that governs apocalyptic events.

This image is a visual celebration of divine sovereignty over the entire universe. The inclusion of the heavenly book amplifies the sense of human responsibility in the face of the inevitable divine judgment. The cosmic atmosphere invites the viewer to contemplate the apocalypse not only as an earthly event but as a universal revelation.

The three illustrations offer a visual narrative progression that passes from local judgment (first image) to cosmic involvement (third image). Every detail—from the scrolls to the apocalyptic horsemen—helps translate the theological intensity of Revelation 9:13-15 into art.

These works not only illustrate but reinterpret the sacred text through a modern lens, mixing iconographic tradition with contemporary sensibility to create images capable of communicating both terror and eschatological hope.

Floating sacred scrolls



Symbols of the Floating Sacred Scrolls: A Theological and Iconographic Analysis

The floating sacred parchments, present in the second and third images of the analyzed section, constitute a stratified symbolic element that draws on biblical tradition, eschatology and mystical iconography. Here are the most significant symbols and their role in the visual narrative of divine judgment:

Inscriptions in Ancient Hebrew and Koine Greek

The scrolls bear characters in Biblical Hebrew (e.g. the Tetragrammaton) and Greek (e.g. "Truth"), reflecting the dual Judeo-Christian heritage of the Apocalypse. This linguistic fusion:

- Symbol of Universality: Hebrew represents the Old Covenant and the Mosaic Law, while Greek alludes to the spread of the Gospel in the Hellenistic world (Acts 11:20: But some of them, who were Cypriots and Cyreneans, came to Antioch and began to speak to the Greeks also, bringing the good news of the Lord Jesus.).

- Reference to Daniel 12,4 (you, Daniel, keep these words hidden and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will study it carefully and knowledge will increase".): The presence of "seals" on the parchments (visible in some rolled parts) evokes the closure of the prophecy until the time of the end.

Number Sequences: 200,000,000 and the Triple 6

In the folds of the parchments there are symbolic numbers:

- 200,000,000: It corresponds to the army mentioned in Revelation 9:16, traditionally interpreted as a metaphor for human uncontrollability. In iconography, it is often rendered with red numerals, symbolizing the blood spilled.

- Triple 6 (666): Written in cuneiform characters, it recalls the "number of the Beast" (Rev 13:18: Here is wisdom. He who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is a man's number; and its number is six hundred and sixty-six.), connected here with the corruption of the nations crossed by the Euphrates.

Floral and Astral Motifs at the Margins

Scroll borders include:

- Vines and Ears of Corn: Eucharistic Symbols (Mt 26:26-29: Holy Supper 26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, from now on I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine, until the day I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.") which contrast with destruction, indicating the persistence of the divine covenant.

- Zodiac constellations: Allude to Daniel 8:10 ("He grew to reach the army of heaven; he made a part of that army and the stars fall to the ground, and trampled them underfoot."), emphasizing the cosmic involvement in the judgment.

The Fire Seal and the Holy Oil

In the foreground, a parchment shows:

- Seal with Flame: It represents the Holy Spirit as purifying fire (Acts 2:3: Tongues appeared to them as if of fire and were divided, and one rested on each of them.), but also the eschatological "lake of fire" (Rev 20:14: Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, that is, the lake of fire).

- Golden Cup with Oil: Symbol of the prophetic anointing (1 Samuel 16,13: Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed it in the midst of his brothers; from that day the Spirit of the LORD came upon David. Then Samuel got up and went back to Ramah), connected to the authority of the angels in liberating the forces of the Euphrates.

Direct Quotes from the Scroll of Ezekiel

Some sections reproduce Ezekiel 2:9-10 (9 I looked, and behold, a hand was stretched out to me, holding the scroll of a book; 10 he unrolled it before me; it was written inside and out, and contained lamentations, groanings, and woes), emphasizing

- Inevitability of Judgment: The text envelops the reader, suggesting the impossibility of escaping divine words.

- Sweet/Bitter Duality: The alternating colors (gold and black) recall John's vision in Revelation 10:9-10 (9 I went to the angel, telling him to give me the booklet. And he answered me, "Take it and devour it: it will be

bitter to your bowels, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." 10 And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel and devoured it. and it was sweet in my mouth, like honey; but when I had eaten it, my bowels felt bitterness), where the scroll is sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly.

The Tetragrammaton in Astral Code

A central parchment shows the divine name YHWH encoded in planetary symbols, quoting Jewish esoteric traditions (Sefer Yetzirah 1:13: He chose three letters from among the simple, in a fundamental secret, and sealed them, forming them into a great Name, and with them sealed the universe in the six directions). This code:

- Symbol of Cosmic Sovereignty: God controls both celestial forces (planets) and terrestrial events.
- Criticism of Astrolatry: The pagan use of the stars is subverted in their attribution to the Creator.

Theological Function of the Parchments

The scrolls are not mere decorations, but narrative tools that:

They connect Time and Eternity: Written in ancient languages but floating in timeless spaces.

They reveal the Divine Paradox: They unite mercy (vines) and justice (fire).

They warn of imminence: Their dynamic movement suggests the inexorable advance of judgment.

As noted above, these scrolls embody the concept of "Visual Logos" – a theology revealed through signs, where each symbol is a piece of the eschatological mosaic.

The heavenly throne

The Celestial Throne in the Iconography of the Sixth Trumpet: Symbolic Evolution

The representation of the heavenly throne in the three analyzed images evolves from an implicit element to a central symbol, reflecting a theological progression from divine transcendence to its active manifestation in judgment. Here's the breakdown for each illustration:

First image: the absent-present throne

Description

In the first illustration, the throne is not visible, but its presence is implicit in the dynamics of the composition:

- Central Golden Light: The beam of divine light that pierces the stormy sky acts as an iconographic substitute for the throne, recalling the description of God as "inhabitant of unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16: the only one who possesses immortality and who dwells in an inaccessible light; whom no man has seen nor can see; to him be honor and eternal power. Amen).
- Directionality of the Trumpet: The angel sounds facing upwards, suggesting that the order to release the four angels comes from an undepicted higher source.

Symbolism

- Radical Transcendence: The physical absence of the throne emphasizes the doctrine of Deus absconditus (Isaiah 45:15: Truly, you are a God who hides yourself, O God of Israel, O Saviour!), where God acts without being confined to visible forms.
- Throne as Voice: The voice that orders judgment (Rev 9:14) is represented by the concentric lines of the trumpet, similar to sound waves, starting from a point beyond the painting.

Second Image: The Distant Throne as a Liturgical Archetype

Description

The throne appears in the distance, suspended in an auroral dimension:

- Crystal Structure: Its 24 steps (cf. Rev 4,4: Around the throne were twenty-four thrones on which sat twenty-four elders dressed in white robes and with golden crowns on their heads) are rendered as prisms of light that refract the colors of the rainbow (Ezekiel 1,28: What is the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of that splendor that surrounded it. It was an appearance of the image of the glory of the LORD. At that sight I fell on my face, and heard the voice of one speaking.)
- Floating Crown: Above the throne floats a crown with 12 stars (Rev 12:1: Then a great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head), symbol of the covenant with Israel and of the Church.

Symbolism

- Ordaining Sovereignty: The elevated and static position reflects the concept of impassive majesty – God observes judgment without being tainted by chaos (Psalm 11:4: The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD has his throne in heaven; his eyes see, his pupils scrutinize the children of men).
- Connection with the Altar: A ray of light joins the throne to the angel's trumpet, visualizing the link between Rev 8:3-5 (altar of incense) and Rev 9:13 (voice from the altar).
- Judicial Throne: The shadows cast by the throne form Latin crosses on the ground, prefiguring the final judgment of Christ (Acts 17:31: because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world with righteousness through the man whom he has appointed, and he has given sure proof of it to all by raising him from the dead").

Third image: The integrated cosmic throne

Description

The throne becomes the fulcrum of the composition, fused with cosmic elements:

- Dynamic Structure: No longer fixed, but composed of rotating circles (as in Ezekiel 1:15-21) that emit rays of light in the shape of swords (Rev 1:16: In his right hand he held seven stars; from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun when it shines in all its strength).
- Throne-Book: The seat is replaced by the open "book of life" (Rev 20:12: And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne. The books were opened, and another book was also opened, which is the

book of life; and the dead were judged by the things written in the books, according to their works), whose pages are transformed into galaxies.

- Multiple Presences: Around the throne were the 24 elders (Rev 4:4: Around the throne were twenty-four thrones on which were seated twenty-four elders dressed in white robes and with golden crowns on their heads) and four cherubim (Rev 4:7: The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had the face of a man and the fourth was like an eagle while flying), rendered as beings with wings covered with eyes.

Symbolism

- Active Immanence: The throne is no longer remote but interacts with creation – its rays of light "carve" the open book, symbol of the Word that shapes history (John 1:3: All things were made through her; and without her not one of the things made was made).

- Throne as Cosmic Center: The galactic spirals that start from the throne illustrate Colossians 1:17 ("He is before all things, and all things hold together in him."), presenting judgment as cosmic reordering.

- Union of Mercy and Justice:

- Jasper Base: Transparent stone (Rev 21:11: with the glory of God. Its splendor was similar to that of a most precious stone, like a crystalline jasper stone) which symbolizes divine purity.

- Armrests with Pomegranates: Biblical fruit of fertility (Deuteronomy 8:8: land of wheat, barley, vineyards, figs and pomegranates; land of olive trees and honey) carved in wood, to remind us of hope beyond punishment.

Comparative Analysis From Concealment to Revelation

Aspect	First Image	Second Image	Third Image
Position	Implicit (beyond the framework)	Distant background	Cosmic Center
Form	Unstructured light	Geometric prism	Dynamic rotating structure
Active Role	Source of commands	Impassive spectator	Transformative Agent
Associated Elements	Trumpet	Scrolls	Book, galaxies, cherubs
Theology	Absolute transcendence	Liturgical sovereignty	Judgment as regeneration

Theological Significance of Iconographic Evolution

From the Invisible to the Visible**: The progressive manifestation of the throne reflects the apocalyptic dialectic between "already and not yet" – the kingdom of God initially veiled, then revealed (Rev 11:15-19).

From Judgment to Regeneration: In the third image, the throne is not only a source of punishment but also of recreation, as suggested by the shoots that sprout in the flames (an image not described but deducible from the floral symbols).

Divine Ecology: The integration of the throne with the galaxies in the third illustration proposes an environmental theology: the judgment is about the reconciliation of "all things" (Colossians 1:20: and to reconcile all things to himself through him, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, both the things that are on earth, but those in the heavens.), not only humanity.

This iconographic progression visually translates the passage from the "theology of terror" to that of "cosmic hope", showing how the heavenly throne, from a remote place of verdict, becomes the matrix of a new creative order.

Big open book

The Great Book Opened in Heaven: Symbolism and Theological Significance

The vision of the "great open book shining with heavenly light", present in the third image of the series analyzed, constitutes a crucial symbolic node for understanding the dialectic between revelation, judgment and regeneration in the Apocalypse of John. This iconographic element synthesizes at least five interconnected theological dimensions:

The Book as a Cosmic Record of Human Actions

Direct Biblical Reference

The open book explicitly echoes Revelation 20:12, where "the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life." In the image:

- Intrinsic Light: The self-contained glow of the book (not reflected) symbolizes the self-sufficiency of divine truth (John 1:4-5:4 In her was life, and life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it.).
- Transparent Pages: Rendered as engraved crystal plates, they allude to the perfect transparency of divine judgment (1 Corinthians 13:12: For now we see as in a mirror, in a dark way; but then we will see face to face; now I know in part; but then I will know fully, as I have also been perfectly known).

Legal Symbolism

- Register of Sins: The red writings on the pages represent sins (Isaiah 1:18: Then come, and let us argue", says the LORD; "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; even if they are red as purple, they will become like wool.), while the gold of the notes indicates the works of faith (Rev 3:18: Therefore I advise you to buy from me gold purified by fire to enrich yourself, and white garments to clothe yourself and so that the shame of your nakedness may not appear; and eye drops to anoint your eyes and see).
- Absence of Closure: Unlike the seals of Revelation 5:1-5, the permanent opening suggests the irrevocability of the final verdict (Hebrews 9:27: How it is established that men die only once, after which comes judgment).

The Book as an Active Instrument of Judgment

Iconographic Dynamics

In the illustration, rays of light start from the book to:

- Shaping the Galaxies: The divine words ("Logos") become creative force (Genesis 1:3: God said: "Let there be light!" And there was light), reorganizing cosmic chaos.
- Dispel the Darkness: The shadows of the apocalyptic horsemen disintegrate on contact with the light of the book, realizing John 1:5 ("darkness has not overpowered it").

Connecting with the Trumpet

The book and the sixth trumpet interact visually:

- Chromatic Resonance: The gold of the trumpet and the book unifies judgment (trumpet) and truth (book).
- Two-way flow: The notes of the trumpet rise towards the book, while the rays descend, visualizing the correspondence between the prayers of the martyrs (Rev 6:9-11) and the divine answer.

The Book as the Threshold between Time and Eternity

Temporal Symbolism

- Multiple Pages: They represent different time dimensions:

- Past: Ancient Hebrew Scriptures (Mosaic Law).
 - Present: Numbering of armies (Rev 9:16) in modern Arabic numerals.
 - Future: Quantum equations at the edges, symbol of eschatological fulfillment beyond current physics.
- Clock Without Hands: Set in the cover, it symbolizes the eternal divine "today" (2 Peter 3:8: But you, beloved, do not forget this one thing: for the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.).

Mystical Threshold

- Dimensional Portal: The hole in the book's binding serves as a gateway to a new heaven (Rev 21:1: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the sea was no more), where the Tree of Life can be glimpsed (Rev 22:2: In the middle of the city square and on both banks of the river stood the tree of life. It yields twelve harvests a year, bears its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations.)

- Living Calligraphy: The Hebrew letters **דַיְ'** ("day") turn into doves, realizing Hosea 2:18 ("I will make a covenant on that day with the animals").

The Book as the Hermeneutic Key to History

Layered structure

The illustration reveals three layers of text:

Surface Level: Apocalyptic prophecies (Dan 12:4: you, Daniel, keep these words hidden and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will study it carefully and knowledge will increase").

Intermediate Level: Names of the martyrs (Rev 3:5: Whoever conquers will therefore be clothed in white robes, and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels) written in white ink on white, visible only in the heavenly light.

Deep Level: Geometric patterns (flowers of life, Metatron's cubes) that reveal the mathematical order of creation (Proverbs 8:27-30:27 When he arranged the heavens I was there; when he drew a circle on the surface of the abyss, 28 when he condensed the clouds on high, when he strengthened the sources of the abyss, 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters would not cross their boundary, when he laid the foundations of the earth, 30 I was with him as a craftsman; I was always exuberant with joy day after day, I rejoiced at all times in his presence).

Detection Function

For the Righteous: The book is a source of consolation, showing the logic behind tribulations (Romans 8:28: Now we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose).

For the wicked: Become a mirror of self-condemnation (John 3:19-20:19 "The judgment is this: the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness more than light, because their works were evil. 20 For whoever does evil things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works be discovered), since their works appear distorted in its pages.

The Book as a Christological Symbol

Connection with the Logos

Cross Shape: The binding of the book creates an implicit Latin cross, identifying Christ as "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us for a time, full of grace and truth; and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father.).

Blood and Ink: The red of the scriptures recalls the sacred ink used in Rev 1:5 ("he has delivered us from our sins with his blood").

Role of mediator

Bridge Between Throne and Earth: The book connects the heavenly throne (sovereignty) to the apocalyptic army (execution), fulfilling 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (24 And the end will come, when he will deliver the kingdom into the hands of God the Father, after he has brought to nothing all principality, all power, and all power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed will be death. 27 For God has put all things under his feet; but when he says that everything is subject to him, it is clear that he who subjected everything to him is excepted. 28 When all things have been subject to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all) on the final submission to Christ.

Wounded by Love: A torn page (top right) forms a wound that resembles the pierced side (John 19:34: but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out), symbol of the redeeming judgment.

Theological Implications in the Perspective of the Essay

According to the analysis developed in Apocalyptic Awakening, the open book:

He demythologizes the Occult: He unmasks the "invisible forces" (Ephesians 6:12: for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness, who are in the heavenly places) behind historical conflicts, showing their submission to the divine plan.

Universalize the Judgment: The cosmic light nullifies all cultural alibi (Romans 1:20: for its invisible qualities, its eternal power and divinity, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being perceived through its works; therefore they are inexcusable), making the truth accessible to all nations.

Transform Terror into Hope: Destruction is not an end in itself, but a surgical act to eradicate evil (Psalm 75:10: I will cut off the power of the wicked, but the power of the righteous will be increased).

Conclusion: From Judgment to Revelation

This culminating symbol transforms the apocalypse from a threat to an epiphany: the book is not only a record of condemnations, but a physical manifestation of divine fidelity to creation. His light, interacting with the sacred scrolls and the throne, reveals that:

Chaos is Temporary: The flames of the Euphrates burn in the light of a higher order.

The names of the martyrs in the book guarantee that no cry is lost (Rev 6:9-11:9 "When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been killed for the word of God and for the testimony they had given. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "How long do you wait, O holy and true Lord, to do justice and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And each of them was given a white robe, and told them to rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers, who were to be killed like them, was complete.)

History is a Liturgy: Every event, even apocalyptic, is known in the cosmic symphony conducted by Christ-Logos (Colossians 1:17: He is before all things, and all things hold together in him).

As noted in the essay, "that open book is not a code of laws, but a love letter written with the fire of grace."

Common Bible Elements

Common Biblical Elements in Sixth Trumpet Images

The images of the Sixth Trumpet, as described in the essay, draw on a rich biblical tradition to represent divine judgment and the release of angelic forces. Here are the most common Bible elements that appear in these illustrations:

The Angel of the Trumpet and the Celestial Sound

Biblical Reference

Revelation 8,13 (I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in the middle of heaven and saying in a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the other trumpet sounds that three angels are about to sound!") and 9:13-15: The angel blows the golden trumpet, emitting waves of heavenly energy that call forth the sound of the trumpet on Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19:16 On the third day, as it was morning, there was thunder, lightning, a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet sound. All the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. and they stopped at the foot of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was all smoking, because the LORD had descended into it in the midst of the fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled strongly. 19 The sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder; Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice).

Symbolism

Announcement of the Judgment: The sound of the trumpet signals the beginning of the plague, connecting to the prophetic tradition of admonition and call to conversion (Isaiah 58:1: "Cry out at the top of your throat, do not hold back, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declares to my people their transgressions, to the house of Jacob their sins").

Divine Power: The golden light radiated by the trumpet symbolizes the divine presence and the power of judgment (Revelation 4,5: From the throne came lightning, voices and thunder. In front of the throne were seven lighted lamps, which are the seven spirits of God.)

The Four Angels Chained along the Euphrates

Biblical Reference

Revelation 9:14-15: The bound angels are set free to execute divine judgment.

Symbolism

Border between Order and Chaos: The Euphrates represents the limit between the known world and the dark forces (Genesis 15,18: On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "I give this land to your descendants, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates").

Release of Destructive Forces: Chains symbolize divine control over evil powers, which are released to execute judgment (Revelation 9:15).

The Apocalyptic Army with Flaming Armor

Biblical Reference

Revelation 9:16-19: The army of horsemen with flaming breastplates and fiery steeds embodies the devastation described in the sacred text.

Symbolism

Purification through Fire: The flames call forth the purifying fire (Malachi 3:2-3:2 Who will be able to endure on the day of his coming? Who will be able to stand when he appears? For he is like the fire of the smelter, like the potash of the washers. 3 He will sit down as one who refines and purifies silver, and he will cleanse the sons of Levi and refine them as gold and silver are made; and they will offer the Lord righteous offerings) and destruction as a means of redemption.

Military and Destructive Power: The knights represent the irresistible power of divine judgment, which overwhelms all human opposition.

The Celestial Throne and the Sacred Scrolls

Biblical Reference

Revelation 4:2-11 and 8:3-5: The heavenly throne represents divine sovereignty, while the floating sacred scrolls symbolize the written divine word.

Symbolism

Divine Sovereignty: The throne is the focal point of heavenly justice, from which orders for judgment are issued.

Divine Word: The scrolls represent the eternal and unalterable truth that guides apocalyptic events.

The Great Book Opened in the Sky

Biblical Reference

Revelation 20:12: The open book of life symbolizes the record of human actions and the final judgment.

Symbolism

Last Judgment: The book represents the transparency and inevitability of the divine verdict, where every action is recorded and evaluated.

Revelation and Regeneration: The light of the book transforms judgment into an act of revelation and regeneration, showing God's plan for creation.

Conclusion: Biblical Elements and Apocalyptic Iconography

These biblical elements, integrated into the iconography of the Sixth Trumpet, create a visual language that translates the sacred text into a contemporary message. The combination of symbols such as the trumpet, chained angels, the apocalyptic army, the heavenly throne, and the open book forms a complex narrative that explores themes of judgment, redemption, and cosmic transformation.

Analysis and Comment:

The sound of the sixth trumpet opens a new chapter in the apocalyptic drama, in which time seems suspended in anticipation of the fulfillment of a cosmic design. In this passage, the liberation of the four angels bound on the Euphrates River represents restrained power, guarded until the time established by a higher order that guides the destiny of the world.

The Symbol of the Four Bound Angels:

The four angels, until then imprisoned, embody a destructive and latent force, a hidden power that waits for the right moment to free itself. Their bond emphasizes the presence of a precise and inescapable order, in which each element, however fearsome, operates according to well-defined cosmic laws.

Power and Progress:

The act of dissolving these angels marks a crucial stage: the "progress" of revelation is manifested through the collapse of the old order, bringing out a new order of reality. This liberation is not a mere act of destruction, but a mechanism of transformation. Apparent chaos becomes the fertile ground for a rebirth, where pain and ruin become bearers of a higher truth, capable of pushing humanity beyond the limits of the known.

Inner Awakening:

The intervention of the sixth trumpet is also a call to inner awakening: an invitation to look beyond the horror and to recognize the presence of a transcendent principle. In this moment of crisis, the divine is perceived not only in the destructive force of the four angels, but also in the possibility of overcoming confusion and embracing a new consciousness. It is a call to transform fear into a drive towards the discovery of a higher order, capable of reorganizing chaos into a new form of beauty and truth.

In short, the sixth trumpet not only announces the liberation of dark powers, but marks the beginning of a transformative process. The collapse of the old order, symbolized by the four liberated angels, is the prelude to an awakening that defies the appearances of chaos, paving the way for a profound and unexpected revelation: that of a progress that is born precisely from catastrophe, bringing with it the promise of an inner and cosmic renewal.

5. Revelation 9:16-19 – Power, Progress and Catastrophe

Biblical text:

16 The number of the mounted soldiers was two hundred million, and I heard their number. 17 And this is how the horses and those who rode them appeared to me in the vision: they had breastplates of the color of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone; The horses had heads similar to those of lions, and fire, smoke, and brimstone came out of their mouths. 18 A third of the men were killed by these three scourges: by the fire, the smoke, and the brimstone that came out of the mouths of the horses. 19 The power of the horses was in their mouths and tails; for their tails were like snakes and had heads, and with them they wounded.

Image Analysis and Commentary

The two images represent an apocalyptic vision inspired by the biblical text of Revelation 9:16-19, emphasizing the destructive and supernatural power described in the passage. Both works depict a scene of cosmic devastation, where technological progress and invisible power are transformed into instruments of catastrophe.

Image 1



This image depicts an apocalyptic battlefield dominated by war horses with lion heads spitting fire, smoke, and brimstone from their mouths. The horses' tails, similar to snakes with menacing heads, are rendered with intricate details that accentuate their supernatural nature. Knights wear armor in vivid colors (fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow), which amplify their otherworldly aura. The sky is dark and stormy, illuminated by dramatic lightning bolts that intensify the eerie atmosphere. The ground is littered with ruins and skeletons, while firestorms envelop the scene.

The image expresses the destructive power of the riders and their steeds, embodying the biblical description of the step. The combination of vivid and contrasting colors (red, blue and yellow) recalls the symbols of divine judgment and purification through fire. The cinematic perspective emphasizes the majesty and horror of the scene, while the intricate details of the creatures and natural elements suggest the inevitability of the catastrophe.

This visual representation amplifies the sense of divine terror and power described in the biblical text. The scene not only communicates physical destruction but also a sense of higher order that transcends human comprehension. The hyper-realistic stylistic choice makes the image an immersive experience for the viewer.

Image 2



The second image shifts the focus to a host of infernal creatures similar to snakes or dragons with flaming heads. Their mouths emanate devastating fire, while the surrounding landscape is consumed by hellish flames. The knights, less central than in the first image, are still present with supernatural auras and menacing looks. Lightning and storm clouds crisscross the sky, creating a dramatic contrast between light and dark. In the background you can see ruins of destroyed cities.

This image emphasizes cosmic chaos through the figure of flaming dragons, symbols of the devastating power described in Revelation 9:19 ("their tails were like serpents"). Cinematic lighting creates a dramatic effect that emphasizes the struggle between human progress (the ruins) and uncontrollable divine forces. The destroyed architectural elements suggest the annihilation of civilization.

The second image focuses more on the global impact of the catastrophe, showing not only supernatural creatures but also the total destruction of the human world. This reinforces the theme of "progress as catastrophe," where what has been man-made is swept away by divine judgment.

Image Comparison

Characteristic	Image 1	Image 2
Main focus	Apocalyptic Knights and Horses	Dragon-like hellish creatures
Atmosphere	Intense battle with supernatural detail	Global destruction with cosmic chaos
Visuals	Vivid armor, firestorms	Hell Flames, Architectural Ruins
Perspective	Kinematics with a focus on riders	Kinematics with a focus on devastation

Both images visually translate the central themes of Revelation 9:16-19: supernatural power, total destruction, and human progress transformed into divine catastrophe. The first image emphasizes the apocalyptic battle starring the infernal knights; the second broadens the vision towards a more global cosmic destruction. Together, they offer a powerful representation of divine judgment according to the biblical text.

Apocalyptic symbols

The two images represent a series of fundamental apocalyptic symbols that embody the destructive and supernatural power described in the biblical text. Here are the main symbols depicted and their meanings:

Apocalyptic Symbols in Images

War horses with lion heads

Horses with lion heads, which spit fire, smoke and brimstone, represent instruments of divine destruction. Fire, smoke, and brimstone are symbols of judgment and devastation, often associated with hell and eternal torment (Revelation 9:17-18). These elements reflect the destructive power of the demonic forces unleashed on the earth.

Tails like snakes

Horse tails, described as snakes with heads, symbolize the deceptive and poisonous nature of evil. Snakes in the Bible are often linked to Satan and temptation (Genesis 3), emphasizing the devious and lethal character of apocalyptic forces (Revelation 9:19).

Knights in vividly colored armor

The colors of the armor (fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow) recall the three destructive elements mentioned in the text (fire, smoke and sulfur). They represent the visible manifestation of supernatural power and divine judgment.

Hellflames

The flames that envelop the battlefield symbolize purification through fire and the final judgment. Fire is a recurring element in Revelation to indicate divine presence or total destruction (Revelation 20:14-15:14 Then death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, that is, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.)

Sky darkness and lightning

The dark sky with intensified lightning represents cosmic chaos and the disruption of the natural order. This symbol is often used to signify the wrath of God and the coming judgment (Revelation 6,12-14:12 "Then I saw when the Lamb opened the sixth seal; and there was a great earthquake; the sun became black as a sack of horsehair, and the moon became all like blood; 13 the stars of heaven fell to the earth as when a fig tree shaken by a strong wind drops its immature figs. 14 The heavens withdrew as a parchment that rolls up; and every mountain and every island was removed from their place); (Matthew 24,29: Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will no longer give its brightness, the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken).

Creatures with serpentine or draconic features

The dragon-like or snake-like creatures depicted in the second image recall the demonic forces unleashed by the Abyss (Revelation 9:1-3). These beings represent the satanic power that torments humanity.

Architectural ruins

The ruins of the destroyed cities symbolize the collapse of human civilization under the weight of divine judgment. This recalls the biblical image of the fall of Babylon as a symbol of human corruption (Revelation 18).

Firestorms

Meaning: The firestorms that envelop the scene reinforce the image of total judgment and devastation brought by supernatural forces.

The images use these symbols to visually represent the central themes of the Apocalypse:

Divine Judgment: The destructive elements (fire, smoke, brimstone) emphasize the inexorable power of divine judgment.

Demonic Forces: The lion-headed horses, snake-tails, and draconic creatures represent the satanic forces unleashed against humanity.

Destruction of Civilization: Architectural ruins show the annihilation of human works as a consequence of sin.

Cosmic Chaos: The darkness of the sky, lightning and storms evoke a rupture of the natural order, a sign of God's direct intervention.

These symbols not only illustrate physical devastation but also the spiritual dimension of the conflict between good and evil, emphasizing the inevitability of divine justice.

War horses

The characteristics of the war horses in the two images differ in some visual and symbolic details, while maintaining their apocalyptic and demonic nature described in Revelation 9:16-19. Here's a comparative analysis:

Characteristics of War Horses

Characteristic	Image 1	Image 2
<u>Lion heads</u>	The horses' heads are detailed and realistic, with an emphasis on ferocity and destructive capacity.	The lion heads are present but less central, with more attention to the fire emitted by the mouths.
<u>Fire, smoke and sulphur emission</u>	Fire, smoke and sulfur are depicted as dominant elements that illuminate the battle scene.	The fire emission is even more intense, with an emphasis on the hellish flames that envelop the environment.
<u>Tails like snakes</u>	The snake-tails are menacing and detailed, with visible heads symbolizing venom and deception.	The snake tails are less noticeable than in Image 1, but they still contribute to the overall chaos.
<u>Role in the scene</u>	The horses are the protagonists of the battle, with the riders leading them in a clear way.	Horses appear more integrated into the destructive landscape, with less emphasis on riders.
<u>Visual perspective</u>	The representation is hyper-realistic and cinematic, with attention to the anatomical details of the horses.	The perspective is broader, with horses merging in the context of a global apocalypse.

Lion heads

The lion heads of the apocalyptic horses in the two images represent a powerful and menacing symbol, directly inspired by the biblical text of Revelation 9:16-19. This visual detail is crucial to understanding the supernatural power and destructive nature of these beings.

Lion Head Symbolism

Power and Ferocity:

Lion's heads symbolize strength and ferocity, attributes typical of this animal. In biblical culture, the lion is often associated with power and royalty, but in this context, it also represents the threat and terror that these beings inspire.

Destructive nature:

The horses' ability to emit fire, smoke, and brimstone from their mouths, combined with the lion's heads, emphasizes their destructive and supernatural nature. This visual element reinforces the idea that these beings are instruments of divine judgment, bearers of death and devastation.

Contrast with Beauty:

- In the image of grasshoppers described in Revelation 9:7-10, there is a contrast between beauty (golden crowns, human faces, hair like women's) and ferocity (dandelions). This contrast is also maintained in the lion's heads of horses, which combine power with threat.

Narrative role:

Lion heads help identify horses as supernatural creatures, linked to divine judgment and total destruction. This symbol reinforces the theme of invisible power and catastrophe that permeates the apocalyptic text.

Differences Between the Two Images

Image 1: The lion heads are detailed and realistic, with an emphasis on ferocity and destructive capacity. This detail is central to the depiction of the apocalyptic battle.

Image 2: Although less central than in the first image, the lion's heads are still present and contribute to the general chaos of the apocalyptic scene.

The lion heads of the apocalyptic horses in the two images represent a powerful symbol of power and destruction, emphasizing the supernatural and menacing nature of these beings. This visual detail is crucial to understanding the apocalyptic context and divine judgment described in the biblical text.

Fire, smoke and sulphur emission

The emission of fire, smoke, and brimstone from the mouths of the apocalyptic horses in the two images is a central element that symbolizes the destructive and supernatural power described in Revelation 9:16-19. This threefold scourge is fundamental to understanding the nature of divine judgment and the devastation it brings.

Symbolism of Fire, Smoke and Brimstone

Fire:

Fire represents divine purification and judgment. In the Bible, fire is often associated with God as an instrument of purification and destruction (2 Peter 3:10-13:10 "The day of the Lord will come as a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a screech, and the elements will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be burned up." 11 Since, therefore, all these things must be dissolved, what must you not be, for holiness of conduct and godliness, 12 while you await and hasten the coming of the day of God, in which the fiery heavens will be dissolved and the inflamed elements will melt! 13 But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.)

In the images, the fire emitted by horses symbolizes the ability to destroy and purify, embodying the divine power that manifests itself through these supernatural beings.

Smoke:

Smoke is a symbol of darkness and confusion. In Revelation 9:2, the smoke from the Abyss pit obscures the sun and the atmosphere, creating an atmosphere of chaos and disorder.

In the images, the smoke that accompanies the fire and brimstone helps to create an apocalyptic atmosphere, emphasizing the supernatural and destructive nature of the horses.

Sulphur:

Sulfur is often associated with divine judgment and punishment. In the Bible, sulfur is used to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24: Then the LORD rained sulfur and fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah).

In the images, the sulfur emitted by horses reinforces the idea of divine judgment and the punishment that befalls humanity.

Narrative and Symbolic Role

Triple Scourge: The emission of fire, smoke, and brimstone is a threefold scourge that kills one-third of mankind (Revelation 9:18). This symbol emphasizes the destructive power of horses and their role as instruments of divine judgment.

Supernatural Power: Horses' ability to emit these destructive elements emphasizes their supernatural nature and their connection to divine or demonic forces.

Differences Between the Two Images

Image 1: The emission of fire, smoke and sulfur is depicted in a detailed and hyper-realistic way, emphasizing the destructive power of the horses and creating an intense apocalyptic atmosphere.

Image 2: Although less detailed, the emission of fire and smoke is even more intense and widespread, contributing to an atmosphere of global destruction.

The emission of fire, smoke and brimstone from the mouths of apocalyptic horses is a powerful symbol of divine judgment and the devastation they bring. This triple scourge represents the destructive and supernatural capacity of these beings, emphasizing their role as instruments of divine power in the apocalyptic narrative.

Tails like snakes

The snake-like tails of the apocalyptic horses in the two images represent a crucial symbolic element, directly inspired by the biblical text of Revelation 9:16-19. This visual detail is crucial to understanding the supernatural and destructive nature of these beings.

Symbolism of Tails as Snakes

Destructive nature:

Snake-like tails with heads represent the ability to harm and hurt. This symbol recalls the deceptive and poisonous nature of evil, often associated with Satan in the Bible (Genesis 3).

In Revelation 9:19, it is specified that the power of horses lies both in their mouths (which emit fire, smoke, and brimstone) and in their tails, which wound like serpents.

Supernatural Power:

Snake tails emphasize the supernatural nature of horses, emphasizing that they are instruments of divine judgment or demonic forces. This symbol reinforces the idea that these beings are endowed with otherworldly powers.

Narrative role:

Snake tails help identify horses as apocalyptic creatures, linked to divine judgment and total destruction. This visual detail is consistent with the biblical description of locusts having tails like scorpions, capable of tormenting men (Revelation 9:3-10).

Differences Between the Two Images

Image 1: The snake-tails are detailed and realistic, with visible heads symbolizing venom and deception. This detail is central to the depiction of the apocalyptic battle.

Image 2: Although less central than in the first image, snake-tails are still present and contribute to the general chaos of the apocalyptic scene.

The snake-like tails of apocalyptic horses represent a powerful symbol of supernatural power and destruction, emphasizing the menacing and otherworldly nature of these beings. This visual detail is crucial to understanding the apocalyptic context and divine judgment described in the biblical text.

Role in the scene

The role of lion's heads and tails as snakes in the two images is crucial to the depiction of the apocalyptic scene. These symbolic elements help to create an atmosphere of terror and destruction, emphasizing the supernatural and menacing nature of the horses.

Role in the Scene

Symbolism of the Threat:

The lion's heads represent power and ferocity, while the snake-tails symbolize deception and venom. These visual elements emphasize the horses' ability to harm and destroy, embodying the supernatural power of divine judgment.

Creating the Apocalyptic Atmosphere:

The combination of lion heads and snake tails helps to create an atmosphere of chaos and total destruction. This symbolism reinforces the idea that horses are instruments of divine judgment, bearers of death and devastation.

Identification of the Knights:

Lion's heads and snake-tails help identify horses as apocalyptic creatures, linked to divine judgment and total destruction. This visual detail is consistent with the biblical description of locusts having tails like scorpions, capable of tormenting men (Revelation 9:3-10).

Differences Between the Two Images

Image 1: The lion's heads and snake-tails are detailed and realistic, with an emphasis on ferocity and destructive capacity. This detail is central to the depiction of the apocalyptic battle.

Image 2: Although less central than in the first image, the lion's heads and snake-tails are still present and contribute to the general chaos of the apocalyptic scene.

The lion's heads and snake-tails of apocalyptic horses represent a powerful symbol of supernatural power and destruction, emphasizing the menacing and otherworldly nature of these beings. This visual detail is crucial to understanding the apocalyptic context and divine judgment described in the biblical text.

Visual perspective

The visual perspective in the two images inspired by Revelation 9:16-19 is key to creating an apocalyptic atmosphere and emphasizing the supernatural power of war horses. The visual perspective in these works is designed to engage the viewer and convey the sense of catastrophe and total destruction.

Visual Perspective in Images

Cinematic and Hyperrealistic:

Both images use a cinematic and hyper-realistic perspective, which amplifies the feeling of realism and immerses the viewer in the apocalyptic scene. This visual style emphasizes the supernatural details of the horses and their central role in the battle.

Contrasts and Lighting:

The visual perspective is enhanced by dramatic contrasts between light and shadow, with lighting that emphasizes the supernatural nature of the horses and the devastation that surrounds them. This use of light and shadow creates a powerful visual effect that increases the emotional impact of the scene.

Focus on Heaven and Destruction:

In image 1, the visual perspective focuses on the apocalyptic battle, with the dark sky and lightning dominating the scene. This emphasizes divine power and the disruption of the natural order.

In image 2, the perspective is broader, showing global destruction and cosmic chaos. The sky is still dark, but the focus is shifted to the hellish flames and ruins that envelop the earth.

Effect on Viewer Perception

The visual perspective in both images influences the viewer's perception in several ways:

Immersiveness: The cinematic and hyper-realistic perspective creates a sense of immersion, making the viewer feel part of the apocalyptic scene.

Emotionality: Dramatic contrasts and lighting emphasize the emotional aspect of the scene, increasing the sense of terror and threat.

Symbolism: The focus on heaven and destruction emphasizes the theme of divine judgment and catastrophe, reinforcing the apocalyptic message.

The visual perspective in the two images is a powerful tool for conveying the supernatural power and devastation described in Revelation 9:16-19. Through the use of dramatic contrasts, cinematic lighting, and a hyper-realistic perspective, these works create an apocalyptic atmosphere that engages the viewer and reinforces the theme of divine judgment and catastrophe.

Key differences

Focus on Anatomical Details:

In image 1, horses are depicted in a hyper-realistic way, with particular attention to lion heads and snake tails.

In image 2, horses lose part of their centrality in favor of an overall view of destruction.

Fire Emission:

In Image 1, fire is an important visual element but balanced by the other details (such as the knights' armor).

In image 2, fire becomes predominant, a symbol of total devastation.

Narrative role:

In image 1, horses are direct instruments of divine judgment and embody supernatural destructive force.

In image 2, the horses appear to be part of a larger, indistinct army that contributes to cosmic chaos.

The two images emphasize different aspects of apocalyptic horses: the first focuses on their supernatural and demonic nature through hyper-realistic details; the second better integrates them into a scene of global destruction, making them part of the larger apocalyptic landscape. Both representations underline the devastating power described in the biblical text but interpret it with different perspectives.

Knight's Armor

The armor of the knights in the two images is of central symbolic and narrative importance, connecting directly to the apocalyptic context of Revelation 9:16-19*. They are not mere decorative elements but vehicles of meaning that amplify the themes of supernatural power, divine judgment and destruction. Here's how they differ and what role they play:

Armor Features in the Two Images

Characteristic	Image 1	Image 2
<u>Colors and Symbolism</u>	The armor is vividly colored (fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow), recalling the three destructive elements of the biblical text: fire, smoke, and brimstone (Revelation 9:17). These colors symbolize divine judgment and devastation.	The colors of the armor are less evident than in image 1, but the supernatural auras surrounding the knights amplify their menacing and otherworldly appearance.
<u>Details and Design</u>	The armors are detailed, with a hyper-realistic design that emphasizes their both protective and symbolic function. They convey a sense of supernatural power and invincibility.	The armor appears more stylized than in the first image, with less emphasis on detail but more attention to the overall aura of the knights.
<u>Narrative role</u>	In image 1, the armor clearly identifies the knights as agents of divine judgment, emphasizing their active role in the apocalyptic battle.	In image 2, armor helps to create an atmosphere of collective terror, with knights appearing as supernatural figures more integrated into the general chaos.
<u>Visual Impact</u>	Dramatic lighting highlights the armatures, making them a central element of the scene. They communicate authority and destruction.	Armor is less central to visual impact, but the knights' supernatural auras make up for this lack of direct detail.

Colors and symbolism

The colors in the Apocalypse of John are fundamental symbolic elements for understanding the theological and apocalyptic message of the text. Here is an analysis of their meaning, with references to the two images described:

Positive Colors

White

Symbolism: Divine transcendence, purity, victory over evil, and justice. Associated with the Risen One (Revelation 1,14: His head and hair were white as white wool, as snow; his eyes were as a flame of fire), with the martyrs (6,11: And each of them was given a white robe and told to rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers was complete, who were to be killed like them) and to the New Jerusalem (21:11: with the glory of God. Its splendor was similar to that of a very precious stone, like a crystalline jasper stone).

Examples:

The white horse of the first rider (Revelation 6,2: I looked and saw a white horse. The one who rode it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he came out victorious, and to win), a symbol of spiritual victory or deception (depending on the interpretation).

The white robes of the redeemed (7:9: After these things I looked and saw an immense crowd that no one could number, coming from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes and with palms in their hands), opposed to the purple of worldly power.

Golden

Symbolism: Divine glory, liturgy and closeness to the mystery of God.

Examples:

The golden crown on Christ's head (Revelation 14,14: Then I looked and saw a white cloud; and on the cloud sat one like a son of man, who had a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand).

The liturgical elements described in the text.

Negative Colors

Red

Symbolism: Violence, war, demonic.

Examples:

The fiery red horse of the second horse (Revelation 6,4: And there came out another horse, red; and the one who rode it was given to take peace from the earth so that men would kill one another, and a great sword was given to him), associated with war and human strife.

The fiery red dragon (Revelation 12,3: And yet another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, which had seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on its heads), a symbol of Satan.

The breastplates of the apocalyptic horsemen (Revelation 9:17), which call for destructive fire.

Black

Symbolism: Death, social injustice, famine.

Examples:

The black horse of the third horseman (Revelation 6:5: When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked and saw a black horse; and the one who rode it had a scale in his hand), linked to famine and economic disparity.

Yellowish green

Symbolism: Fragility of life, death.

Examples:

The greenish horse of the fourth horseman (Revelation 6:8: I looked and saw a yellowish horse; and the one who rode it was called Death; and Hades came after him. They were given power over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, with hunger, with mortality, and with the beasts of the earth.), associated with death and Hades.

Specific Colors of the Images Described

Fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulphur yellow

Symbolism:

Red: Violence and divine judgment (Revelation 9:17).

Hyacinth Blue: A color not directly mentioned in the Apocalypse, but it could symbolize depth or mystery.

Sulfur Yellow: Associated with biblical sulfur, a symbol of punishment and destruction (Revelation 9:17-18).

Function: The riders' breastplates reflect the three destructive elements (fire, smoke, brimstone) emitted by the horses, reinforcing the theme of total judgment.

Black sky and storms

Symbolism: Cosmic chaos and divine intervention.

Examples:

The darkness of heaven in Revelation 6:12-14 (12 And I saw when the Lamb opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as a sack of horsehair, and the moon became all like blood. 13 The stars of heaven fell upon the earth as when a fig tree shaken by a strong wind drops its immature figs. 14 And the heavens withdrew like a scroll that rolls up, and every mountain and every island was removed from their place), a sign of divine wrath.

The smoke from the Abyss pit (Revelation 9:2), which obscures the sun.

Contrasts and Narrative Function

White vs Red: The white of divine victory opposes the red of human or demonic violence, emphasizing the struggle between good and evil.

Red vs Black: The red of destructive fire and the black of death create a visual contrast that emphasizes total devastation.

Chromatic and Numerical Symbolism: Colors are often paired with symbolic numbers to amplify the theological message.

The colors in Revelation and in the images described are not random, but vehicles of meaning that reinforce the themes of judgment, purification and the final victory of God. Red, black and white dominate the apocalyptic scene, while hyacinth blue and sulphur yellow add symbolic details related to the specific context of the destruction.

Details and design

The details and design of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse vary according to biblical interpretations and artistic representations, but they have recurring symbolic elements. Here is an analysis based on the available sources:

Details and Design of the Knights

White Horse (First Rider)

Symbol: Bow and golden crown.

Interpretation:

Positive: Represents Christ or the victory of Christian preaching (ancient tradition).

Negative: Associated with the antichrist or a false conquest (post-Reformation interpretation).

Design:

Bow: Instrument of war or symbol of peace (depending on interpretation).

Crown: Divine power or deception.

Red Horse (Second Rider)

Symbol: Great sword.

Interpretation:

War and violence: It takes peace from the earth, triggering human strife (Revelation 6:4).

Red: Spilled blood and destruction.

Design:

Sword: An instrument of death and chaos.

Fiery red horse: Associated with the dragon (Revelation 12:3), symbol of evil.

Black Horse (Third Rider)

Symbol: Libra.

Interpretation:

Famine and social injustice: Exorbitant prices for wheat and barley, while oil and wine (spiritual symbols) remain intact (Revelation 6:5-6).

Black color: Death and economic disparity.

Design:

Libra: Measure of divine justice or human injustice.

Greenish Horse (Fourth Horseman)

Symbol: Name Death, followed by Hades.

Interpretation:

Death and pestilence: Chloros color (sickly green) recalls disease and decay.

Total power: He kills with the sword, hunger, death, and wild beasts (Revelation 6:8).

Design:

Greenish horse: Symbol of putrefaction and end of life.

The details and design of the knights reflect their symbolic role in the biblical text: war, famine, death and deception. Artistic representations (from Renaissance woodblock prints to modern video games) amplify these elements, often adding visual details that reinforce the apocalyptic terror.

Narrative role

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse play a central narrative role in the biblical text and its interpretations, serving as instruments of divine judgment and symbols of catastrophic events. Here is a detailed analysis of their narrative meaning:

Narrative Role in the Biblical Text

Instruments of Divine Judgment

- Horsemen appear at the opening of the first four seals of the celestial scroll (Revelation 6:1-8), triggering destructive events that precede the final judgment.

First rider (white horse):

Conflicting interpretations:

Positive: Represents Christ or the victory of Christian preaching (ancient tradition).

Negative: Symbolizes the antichrist or false messiahs who deceive with a false peace (post-Reformation interpretation).

Narrative function: Introduces the theme of conquest, both divine and demonic, preparing the ground for subsequent catastrophes.

Second rider (red horse):

War and violence: It takes peace from the earth, triggering human strife (Revelation 6:4).

Narrative function: It represents the destruction caused by wars and massacres, highlighting human instability.

Third rider (black horse):

Famine and injustice: Balance exorbitant prices for wheat and barley, while oil and wine (spiritual goods) remain intact (Revelation 6:5-6).

Narrative function: Criticizes economic disparities and corruption, emphasizing divine justice.

Fourth rider (greenish horse):

Death and pestilence: He kills with the sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts (Revelation 6:8).

Narrative function: Embodies the total end, synthesizing the cumulative effects of the other knights.

Symbols of Historical or Eschatological Events

Preterist interpretation: Some exegetes link them to events that had already occurred (e.g. the fall of the Roman Empire or the threat of the Parthians).

Futurist interpretation: They see them as signs of imminent eschatological events, precursors of the Last Judgment.

Contemporary metaphors

Four Mafia Knights:

They symbolize economic corruption and illegal power, with references to the Sicilian mafia.

Film and Literature:

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1921): Uses metaphor to describe death, pestilence, and war during World War I.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse embody divine judgment and destruction in different ways, depending on interpretations. In the biblical text, they represent catastrophic events related to war, famine and death, while in modern culture they become metaphors for criticizing corrupt powers or describing global crises. Their narrative role is twofold: they prepare the ground for the final judgment and synthesize human evils, emphasizing the urgency of redemption.

Visual impact

The visual impact of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse varies according to artistic and cultural interpretations, but always remains linked to their symbolic role as harbingers of catastrophe.

Visual Impact in the Biblical Text

In the Revelation of John (6:1-8), horsemen are described through concise but powerful symbols:

White Horse:

A golden bow and crown (Revelation 6:2).

Interpretation: The crown and bow evoke power and conquest, with an ambiguity that oscillates between divine victory and deception (antichrist or false messiah).

Red Horse:

The sword and the power to take away peace (Revelation 6:4).

Symbolism: Blood and war, with a visual effect that recalls chaos and violence.

Black Horse:

Scales and exorbitant prices for wheat and barley (Revelation 6:5-6).

Impact: Counteracts material famine with the preservation of spiritual possessions (oil and wine), creating a dramatic contrast.

Greenish horse:

Death and Hades (Revelation 6:8).

Symbolism: A color associated with disease and putrefaction, with a visual effect that embodies the total end.

Visual Impact in Popular Culture

Contemporary metaphors:

War, Famine, Pestilence, Death: Associated with global crises (e.g., pandemics, conflicts) or environmental hazards (e.g., climate change).

Example: The war in Ukraine is compared to the red horse, while the pandemic is compared to the greenish horse.

The visual impact of the four horsemen derives from their symbolic ambiguity and ability to evoke terror through elements such as colors, attributes (sword, scales) and apocalyptic contexts. In art, this impact is amplified by styles that privilege contrast, deformation or drama, while in modern culture they become metaphors for real crises, keeping their narrative power intact.

Importance of Armor in Apocalyptic Contexts

Symbol of Supernatural Power

In both images, the armor represents the visible manifestation of the divine or demonic power that guides the knights. The vivid colors (red, blue and yellow) not only recall the destructive elements (fire, smoke and sulfur), but also emphasize the otherworldly origin of these warriors.

Identification Tool

In image 1, the armor serves to distinguish the knights as specific supernatural entities, linked to divine judgment. This detail is consistent with the biblical idea of heavenly or infernal armies with distinctive signs.

In image 2, however, supernatural auras partially replace the identifying role of armor, making knights more generic but equally threatening figures.

Strengthening the Apocalyptic Atmosphere

In image 1, the hyper-realism of the armor helps to create a visually intense and detailed scene that amplifies the sense of impending destruction.

In image 2, the use of supernatural auras around knights shifts the emphasis from the materiality of armor to its symbolic function as harbingers of catastrophe.

Reference to Chivalric Ideals

The armor recalls medieval ideals of strength and invincibility (as in the historical context of chivalric armor), but here it is distorted to represent destructive forces rather than protective or heroic forces.

In the two images, the knights' armor is not just aesthetic elements but powerful apocalyptic symbols. In image 1 they stand out for their hyper-realistic details and for their direct connection to the destructive elements of the biblical text; in image 2 they lose visual centrality but are replaced by supernatural auras that enhance their demonic character. In both cases, they represent supernatural power at the service of divine judgment and help to reinforce the apocalyptic atmosphere of the scenes represented.

The sky

The sky in the two images inspired by Revelation 9:16-19 is represented with features that amplify the sense of chaos and divine judgment, but with some significant differences between the two works.

Representation of the Sky

Characteristic	Image 1	Image 2
<u>Darkness and Atmosphere</u>	The sky is deeply dark, almost completely devoid of natural light. The darkness is intensified by the smoke rising from the Abyss pit, echoing the biblical passage in which the sun and atmosphere are obscured by the smoke of a great furnace (Revelation 9:2).	Here, too, the sky is dark, but the emphasis is on dramatic contrasts between light and darkness, with cinematic illumination accentuating global destruction.
<u>Lightning and Storms</u>	Intense lightning strikes across the sky, creating an eerie and apocalyptic atmosphere. These visual elements emphasize divine intervention and the disruption of the natural order.	Lightning is present but less central than in the first image. The cosmic storm appears more widespread, contributing to the sense of total chaos.
<u>Smoke and the Underworld</u>	The sky is enveloped in dense fumes that rise from the Abyss well, a symbol of the connection between heaven and hell. Smoke represents the visible manifestation of the evil unleashed on earth.	The smoke is less predominant than in the first image, but the infernal flames rising towards the sky suggest a continuity between the earth and the otherworldly dimension.
<u>Visual Perspective</u>	The cinematic perspective emphasizes the sky as a central element, helping to create a sense of oppression and supernatural threat.	The sky appears more integrated into the overall context of the devastation, serving as a backdrop for the apocalyptic scene.

Darkness and Atmosphere

The darkness and atmosphere in the representations of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are fundamental symbolic and narrative elements, linked to divine judgment and catastrophe.

Darkness in the Biblical Text

Black horse and famine

Symbolism: The black horse (Revelation 6:5-6) is associated with famine and economic injustice. Its presence evokes an atmosphere of scarcity and despair, with exorbitant prices for wheat and barley, while oil and wine (spiritual goods) remain intact.

Metaphorical Darkness: Famine is not only physical, but also spiritual, symbolizing hopelessness and human corruption.

Greenish horse and death

Color and Meaning: The greenish horse (Revelation 6:8) is described with a Greek term (*chloros*) that recalls sickly green or yellowish, associated with disease and putrefaction. This color creates an atmosphere of death and decay.

Followers: Death and Hades, which amplify existential darkness, representing the total end and the absence of redemption.

Sixth Seal and Cosmic Darkness

Revelation 6:12-14: After the opening of the sixth seal, the sun becomes black as coal, the moon blood-red, and the stars fall from the sky. These events symbolize cosmic chaos and divine wrath, creating an atmosphere of terror and disorder.

Apocalyptic atmosphere

War and violence (red horse)

Sword and strife: The red horse (Revelation 6:4) embodies war and human violence, taking peace from the earth. The atmosphere is dominated by blood and chaos, with an emphasis on mutual destruction.

Conquest and ambiguity (white horse)

Conflicting interpretations:

Positive: Represents Christ or the victory of Christian preaching (ancient tradition).

Negative: Symbolizes the antichrist or false messiah (post-Reformation interpretation).

Atmosphere: The white knight's ambiguity creates a sense of uncertainty, emphasizing the struggle between good and evil.

Death and pestilence (greenish horse)

Pestilence and disease: The greenish horse (Revelation 6:8) combines physical death with epidemics, evoking an atmosphere of suffering and inevitable end.

Divine limitations: The destruction is limited to a quarter of the earth, but the psychological effect is total, symbolizing human helplessness in the face of judgment.

The darkness** and atmosphere in the four horsemen of the Apocalypse reflect divine judgment and catastrophe, with elements such as color, symbolism and narrative context. In the biblical text, darkness is linked to cosmic chaos, famine and death, while in modern culture it becomes a metaphor for real crises (wars, pandemics) or existential terror. The apocalyptic atmosphere, dominated by terror, ambiguity and impotence, remains a universal theme that transcends the historical context.

[Lightning and Storms](#)

Lightning and storms in the Bible are symbolic elements related to divine judgment, the manifestation of God's power, and eschatological transformation.

Lightning and Storm Symbolism

Divine Judgment

Revelation 11:19:

Background: The opening of the celestial temple and the appearance of the ark of the covenant are accompanied by lightning, thunder, earthquakes, and hail.

Meaning: These natural phenomena symbolize divine wrath and the final judgment, setting the stage for God's victory over evil.

Revelation 16:18:

Background: An earthquake "of which there has never been a like" is followed by lightning, thunder and hail.

Meaning: It represents the culmination of divine judgment, with elements that evoke total destruction and restoration.

Manifestation of Divine Power

Exodus 19:16:

Background: At Mount Sinai, thunder, lightning, and clouds accompany the revelation of the Ten Commandments.

Meaning: The lightning strikes emphasize God's holiness and unapproachability, instilling awe in the people.

Job 37:3:

Background: God makes thunder sound and lightning "under all the heavens."

Meaning: Lightning embodies the divine superimposition on natural forces, reminding man of his limitations.

Eschatological Transformation

Revelation 14:2:

Background: After the seventh seal, thunder, voices, and lightning mark the beginning of Christ's reign.

Meaning: Atmospheric phenomena symbolize the end of the old order and the advent of the new.

Lightning as an Instrument of God

Punishment and Purification

Numbers 16:35:

Context: Divine fire consumes the rebels against Moses, associated with a quick and inexorable judgment.

Meaning: Fire (similar to lightning) is an instrument of purification and correction, eliminating evil.

Revelation 8:5:

Background: The angel throws the censer on the earth, unleashing thunder, voices, lightning and earthquakes.

Meaning: Lightning anticipates the seven plagues, connecting with the destruction of corrupt systems.

Call to Conversion

Acts 9:3:

Background: The blinding light that strikes Saul on the road to Damascus (similar to lightning) converts him.

Meaning: Lightning can be tools of redemption, not just punishment.

Storms as Eschatological Signs

Revelation 11:19:

Background: The hail storm accompanies the opening of the celestial temple.

Meaning: The hail symbolizes divine justice that strikes the wicked, preparing the final victory.

Deuteronomy 29:16:

Background: Hail will destroy crops, marking the end of an era.

Meaning: Storms are warning signs of judgment, inviting repentance.

The lightning and storms in the Bible represent divine power, judgment, and eschatological transformation. They are instruments of purification, punishment or call to conversion, often linked to cosmic events that mark the end of evil and the coming of the kingdom of God. Their symbolic use reflects the complexity of the biblical concept of judgment, which combines wrath and mercy, destruction and restoration.

Smoke and the Underworld

Smoke and the underworld elements in the Bible are recurring symbols related to divine judgment, purification and supernatural presence, often associated with apocalyptic phenomena.

Smoke as a Symbol

God's Presence and Prayer

Revelation 8:4:

- The smoke of the perfumes, combined with the prayers of the saints, rises in the presence of God, symbolizing the divine acceptance of supplications.

Meaning: Smoking represents mediation between man and God, with the angel acting as the intermediary.

Revelation 15:8:

The heavenly temple is filled with the smoke of God's glory, preventing access until the end of judgments.

Meaning: Smoking emphasizes God's inaccessible holiness and preparation for the final judgment.

Judgment and Destruction

Revelation 9:2:

- The smoke from the Abyss Well obscures the sun and atmosphere, unleashing demonic locusts.

Meaning: Smoking is a sign of chaos and the release of evil forces.

Revelation 14:11:

The smoke of the torment of idolaters rises "forever and ever", a symbol of eternal punishment.

Meaning: Smoking embodies the perpetuity of chastisement for those who reject God.

Purification and Liturgy

Exodus 19:18:

- The smoke of Sinai during the revelation of the Ten Commandments symbolizes the purification of the people and the separation between the sacred and the profane.

Revelation 8:5:

The angel casts the fire of the altar on the earth, unleashing thunder, lightning and earthquakes.

Meaning: The smoke of the divine fire is an instrument of violent purification, preparatory to judgment.

Underworld Elements

Abyss Well (Revelation 9:1-11)

Smoke and Locusts:

The smoke of the well darkens the sun and releases locusts with power to torment men.

Meaning: The Abyss is a place of demonic imprisonment, and the smoke signals its opening, triggering suffering.

Revelation 20:1-3:

Satan is bound and cast into the Abyss for a thousand years, marking a temporary truce.

Fire and Brimstone

Revelation 14:10:

Those who worship the beast will be tormented with fire and brimstone, a symbol of eternal punishment.

Revelation 19:20:

- The beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they will burn forever.

Meaning: Fire and brimstone represent the ultimate judgment, linked to hell and total destruction.

Smoke in the Bible is a multi-purpose symbol:

Divine: Presence of God, prayer accepted, purification.

Infernal: Judgment, eternal torment, apocalyptic chaos.

The underworld elements (Abyss, fire, sulfur) are instruments of divine judgment, linked to the punishment of the wicked and the liberation of demonic forces. Both themes emphasize the duality of God's plan: mercy for the redeemed and destruction for the rebellious.

Visual Perspective

The visual perspective in apocalyptic art is a narrative and symbolic tool that transforms biblical visions into immersive experiences, adapting to the techniques and aesthetic sensibilities of different eras.

Visual Perspective in Apocalyptic Art

Middle Ages and Romanesque

Frescoes and miniatures:

Examples: The frescoes of San Quirce de Pedret (Catalonia) and the crypt of Anagni use flat, symbolic compositions, with overlapping figures to emphasize the theological message.

Function: Perspective is sacrificed in favor of narrative clarity, with elements such as the Four Horsemen or the Lamb represented schematically but loaded with meaning.

Capitals and sculptures:

Cloister of Moissac: The Romanesque capitals show apocalyptic scenes with angels, beasts and human figures in a two-dimensional style, favoring symbolism over depth.

Late Gothic and Printed Bibles

Woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer (1498):

Innovation: Dürer blends Renaissance realism and visionary dynamism, focusing on details such as Christ's double-edged sword or the four horsemen in a single scene.

Perspective: The compositions are densely populated, with oblique viewing angles that amplify the sense of chaos (e.g. The Fall of Babylon).

Cologne and Nuremberg Bibles:

Narrative synthesis: Scenes such as the Last Judgment or the heavenly Jerusalem are condensed into small spaces, with multiple perspectives to enclose several episodes in a single image.

Renaissance and Humanism

- Dürer and the legacy:

- Influence: Dürer's woodcuts set a model for apocalyptic art, combining anatomical precision and symbolism, as in the case of the Christ with flaming eyes and white hair (Revelation 1:12-20).

Stained glass windows and mosaics:

Heavenly Jerusalem: Represented as an idealized city with geometric perspectives, angels and blessed arranged in a harmonious way, emphasizing eschatological perfection.

Visual Perspective as a Theological Tool

Symbolism and Catechesis

Didactic function: Apocalyptic images, especially in the Middle Ages, served to explain complex concepts (judgment, redemption) to an illiterate public.

Example: The four horsemen in Dürer are depicted in a single scene, with the red of conflict, the black of famine and the green of death, creating a visual contrast that synthesizes the text.

Dramatization of Chaos

Heaven and Hell:

Revelation 9:2: The smoke from the Abyss well obscures the sun, represented in art with dense shadows and demonic figures emerging from the darkness.

Revelation 20:11-15: The Last Judgment is often depicted with Christ enthroned, angels with trumpets, and the damned thrown into the lake of fire, using vertical perspectives to separate heaven and hell.

Hope and Redemption

Heavenly Jerusalem:

Geometric perspective: The city is shown with perfect walls, golden gates and the tree of life, a symbol of harmony and perfection, often contrasting with the earthly chaos.

The visual perspective in apocalyptic art is a flexible and symbolic tool, adapted to the techniques and theological needs of each era. From the flat compositions of the Middle Ages, to Dürer's dynamic woodcuts, to Gothic stained glass windows, it transforms biblical visions into visual experiences that combine terror, hope and teaching. Its role is not only aesthetic, but catechetical and eschatological, inviting the viewer to reflect on divine judgment and redemption.

Key differences

Centrality of the Sky:

In image 1, the sky is a key element that dominates the scene, with lightning and darkness amplifying the apocalyptic atmosphere.

In image 2, the sky is less central but still contributes to the sense of total destruction through visual contrasts.

Smoke vs Flames:

Image 1 places more emphasis on smoke obscuring the sun and atmosphere, in line with the biblical text (Revelation 9:2).

In image 2, the hellish flames become the protagonists, suggesting a direct connection between earth and devastated sky.

Lightning:

In image 1 the lightning is more intense and dramatic, a symbol of the breakdown of the cosmic order.

In image 2, lightning is less noticeable, contributing to an atmosphere of widespread chaos rather than isolated effects.

The sky in both images represents a crucial dimension of the apocalypse: in image 1 it directly symbolizes divine intervention through darkness, lightning and smoke; In image 2 it serves as a backdrop for global chaos, with a greater emphasis on hellfires. Both representations visually translate the divine judgment and the rupture of the natural order described in the biblical text.

[Analysis and Commentary:](#)

The images evoke the majesty of a colossal army, a horde of two hundred million warriors whose power is as immense as it is inexorable. This scenario leaves no room for doubt: the judgment is implacable, and the battle, of cosmic scope, overwhelms all human resistance.

The Imposing Army:

The vision of such a large number of troops underlines the impossibility of escaping an already marked fate. Each soldier becomes part of a collective force that embodies destiny, showing how divine power operates on a scale that transcends our everyday understanding. The images are a reminder of the fact that, in the great cosmic design, man appears as insignificant in the face of the immensity of judgment.

The Power of the Unseen:

The fire, smoke and brimstone that come out of the warriors' mouths represent not only a physical manifestation of destruction, but also the presence of a power that defies all human logic. These elements, symbols of a divine fury, testify to a force that exceeds any ability to control or predict. It is the power of the invisible, which manifests itself through spectacular and terrifying phenomena, leaving man powerless before the vastness of the mystery.

Apocalyptic Progression and Unveiling of the Truth:

The growing intensity of the catastrophe should not be seen solely as a spiral of destruction, but also as an act of unveiling. Every destructive element becomes, in fact, a call to confront the ultimate truth, the one that resides beyond the appearances of the everyday world. The apocalyptic progression, with its crescendo of chaos and destruction, turns into an invitation to overcome illusions and glimpse a deeper reality, in which the end of the old order opens the door to a new form of awareness and rebirth.

In this scenario, catastrophe is not an end in itself, but the means through which the divine is revealed in its purest and most inexorable essence. Humanity, in the face of such an imposing force, is called to recognize its limits and to embark on a path of inner transformation, where pain and destruction become precursors of an awakening that transcends the banal everyday, opening the way to a spiritual and cosmic rebirth.

6. Revelation 9:20-21 – Human Obstinacy and Failure to Convert

Biblical text:

20 The rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands; they did not cease to worship demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, nor of their sorcery, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.



The image depicts a post-apocalyptic landscape with a ruined city, populated by desperately human figures and demonic creatures. The atmosphere is gloomy, dominated by dark colors and a menacing sky, with green flashes and a moon above.

The scene is divided into several levels:

On the left, among the ruins of a building, some monstrous figures observe fallen humanity. An individual enveloped in light approaches an exit, perhaps a symbol of redemption or final judgment.

In the center, a mass of people walk towards the destroyed city, perhaps representing humanity that persists in its obstinacy, despite the signs of devastation.

On the right, some characters dressed in religious robes and halos seem to preach or offer a chance for redemption. However, many figures around them still appear corrupt or indifferent.

This representation recalls Revelation 9:20-21, which speaks of humanity that, despite divine scourges and punishments, does not repent of its sins and continues in its idolatry and immorality. The visual scene emphasizes precisely this resistance to change, contrasting the possibility of salvation with human stubbornness.

The Apocalypse and Human Resistance

The following two images evoke a powerful and symbolic representation of Revelation 9:20-21, a passage that speaks of humanity's resistance to conversion despite divine cataclysms. These verses underline how, even after devastating plagues, humanity persists in its idolatry and sins without repentance.

First image: Human Indifference to Divine Signs

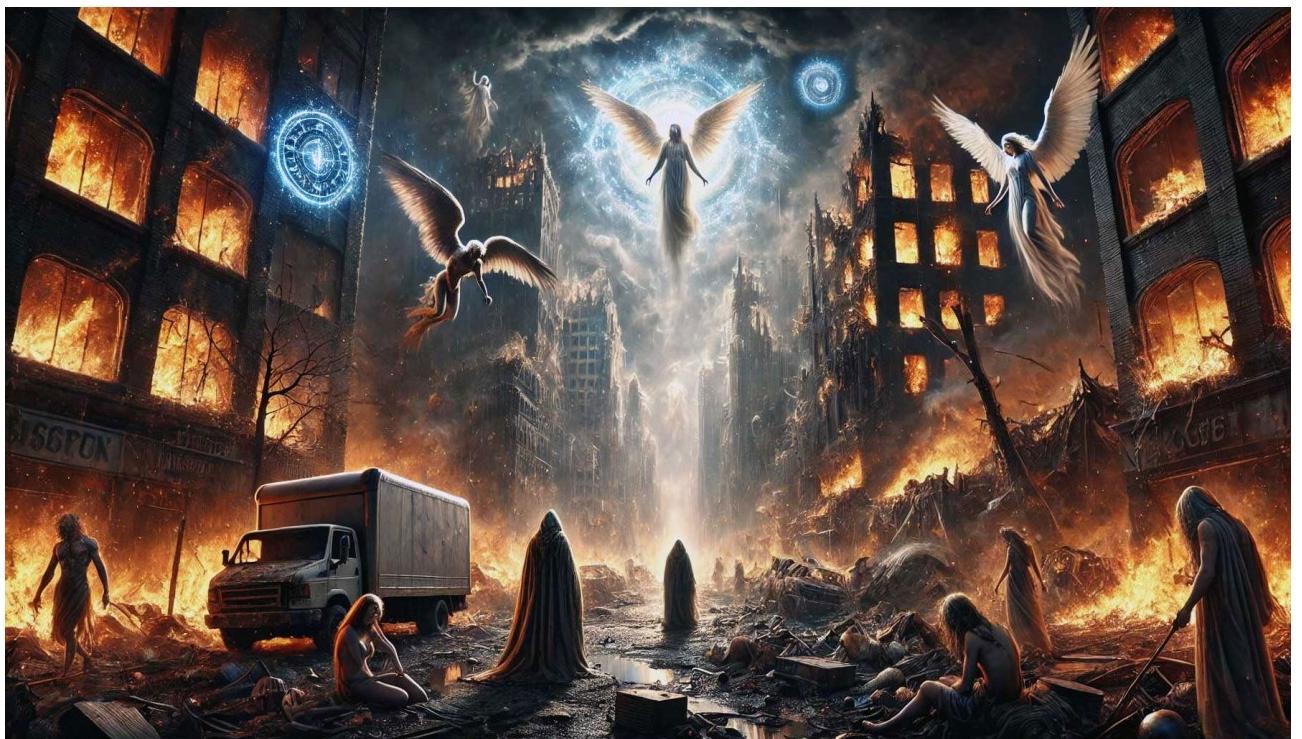


The scene shows a post-apocalyptic landscape, with destroyed cities, ruined buildings and fires still burning. The atmosphere is gloomy, with a cloudy sky and intense light coming from above. A radiant angelic figure appears in the sky with outstretched wings, a divine sign of heavenly intervention. However, on earth, humans seem completely oblivious to the supernatural vision: they are portrayed wandering through rubble, taking refuge among remains, or focusing solely on their own survival.

This image reflects the theme of human indifference to divine signs. Despite the destruction, there is no sign of conversion or spiritual awareness. This echoes Revelation 9:20-21, which states that mankind, while surviving plagues, does not abandon its idolatry and evil practices. The scene suggests that chaos and despair

have now consumed men to the point of blinding them to divine revelation. Their attachment to the material world and the struggle for survival prevents them from responding to the calls of the transcendent.

Second Image: A More Intense Divine Presence, but Resistance Persists



This scene is even more intense than the first. The devastation is total: fires are more widespread, the rubble more evident, and the sky opens up with even more divine signs. The angels appear even more pronounced, surrounded by circles of light and mystical symbols. However, on the ground, most human beings continue to ignore these signs, immersed in their suffering and chaos. Only a solitary figure finally seems to look up in amazement, as if struck by the epiphany that manifests itself above her.

This second image represents a crescendo in apocalyptic tension. The divine manifestation is more evident, more imposing, yet the human reaction remains largely unchanged: the world has sunk into its own abyss of destruction and degradation. The solitary figure observing the sky could be the exception, the awakened soul that finally recognizes the sign and could embark on a path of conversion. But the rest of mankind remains numb, just as described in Revelation 9:20-21: Despite everything, men do not repent.

Conclusion: Human Resistance to Transformation

These two images illustrate one of the central themes of the Apocalypse: humanity's resistance to redemption, even in the face of irrefutable signs of the divine presence. The world is devastated, judgment is evident, but most people remain closed in their condition, clinging to materiality and despair. However, the second image introduces an element of hope: awakening is possible, but it is a lonely and difficult journey.

This reflection can be read in a negative theological key: the ultimate truth does not manifest itself in an imposing way, but requires an inner emptiness, an abandonment of earthly illusions in order to be recognized. Here we see the paradox of the Apocalypse: God reveals himself, but only those who are ready to give up their inner resistance can welcome this revelation.

The meaning of Revelation 9:20-21

A people that does not repent, that refuses change

The book of Revelation is a succession of signs, warnings and cataclysms that should shake humanity and push it to repentance. Yet, the passage of Revelation 9:20-21 presents us with a disturbing reality: despite the plagues and scourges that befall the world, men do not repent. On the contrary, they continue undaunted on their path of corruption and idolatry, as if nothing could break their attachment to evil.

Idolatry and Blind Perseverance in Sin

The text emphasizes a crucial point: humanity not only ignores divine calls, but persists in the worship of demons and idols, embracing false gods and immoral practices. It is a powerful and terrible image: man, faced with ruin, instead of seeking redemption, clings even more to his illusions, to the symbols of earthly power, to his dark passions. The call to conversion remains unheeded, suffocated by the stubbornness of those who refuse to look beyond their own condition.

A Warning Message for the Future

These verses are not just a narrative of apocalyptic events, but a profound warning about the nature of the human heart. They reveal the tragic truth of a humanity that, even in the face of evidence, chooses to remain blind. It is a warning that spans the centuries, reminding us that conversion does not happen by compulsion, but only through authentic inner transformation. The Apocalypse, after all, is not only the end of a world, but the test of conscience: in the face of divine signs, will we choose to awaken or will we continue to close our eyes?

The obstinacy of humanity in the face of divine signs

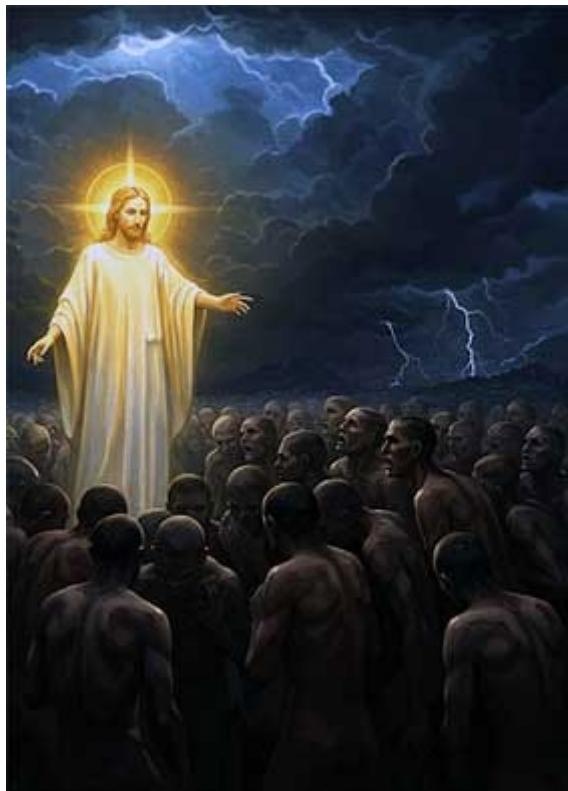


Image description

Context and Atmosphere: an apocalyptic landscape where the sky is a whirlwind of dark and threatening clouds, illuminated here and there by flashes of purple and orange light. The air is charged with an almost palpable tension, where the struggle between light and darkness is evident. The contrast between the divine and the earthly becomes dramatic and emotionally intense.

The Sacred Figure: At the center of the scene, a bright and imposing figure stands out against the chaos. This figure represents the divine, with a serene and compassionate but also authoritative face. Wearing flowing robes and regalia, which seem to catch and reflect light, creating an aura of hope and mercy. The most intense feature is an outstretched hand, outstretched in a universal gesture of offering and redemption.

Stubborn Humanity: In front of this figure, a multitude of human beings – depicted in a stylized but expressive way – are still and rigid. Their faces express pride, distrust, or even an expression of contempt. Some even look back, symbolizing the categorical rejection of a saving guide. The diversity of faces and features suggests that this attitude of rejection manifests itself in every corner of humanity.

Humans are represented with strong lines and closed postures (hands crossed, gazes turned elsewhere), in contrast with the open and generous pose of the sacred figure.

The stubborn resistance of humanity in the face of divine signs emerges forcefully in this passage. Despite the chastisements and warnings that should lead to repentance, men persist in their attitude of rejection, remaining firm in a deep spiritual obstinacy. This lack of change is not only a display of disbelief, but also reflects entrenched moral corruption and a departure from ethics that could have led them to redemption.

Idolatry and the rejection of repentance

Humanity is clinging to a cult of false gods, made of gold, silver and stone, symbols of a blind and deep attachment to materiality. In this scenario, instead of seeking divine truth, people take refuge in earthly idols and symbols, ignoring the call to repentance.

Despite the punishments and divine signs that should shake the conscience, man continues undaunted in his descent, indulging in immoral behavior, murder and magical practices. This refusal to forsake sin reveals a hardened heart, incapable of opening itself to the possibility of redemption.

The consequences of such rebellion are terrible: failure to convert is not only a sign of unbelief, but involves a definitive separation from God and subjection to an inexorable judgment, as the apocalyptic prophecies warn us. In essence, the passage invites us to reflect on the tragic fate of those who, having chosen to ignore the divine, condemn themselves to live in the shadow of their error.

The role of suffering as a warning

The sufferings described in the Book of Revelation are not simple episodes of pain, but powerful divine signs aimed at shaking humanity and pushing it towards conversion. However, all too often these messages, laden with a profound warning, are misunderstood or ignored, leaving the call to repentance to fall on deaf ears.

The Theological Implications of Non-Conversion

The theological implications of the lack of conversion are a warning that spans the centuries. Human pride, along with an unrelenting attachment to sins and hardness of heart, moves many to ignore divine signs. In a world where the light of redemption could illuminate the path of change, too many souls choose to remain immersed in an existence devoid of repentance, refusing the call of grace.

Analysis and Comment:

In these verses a harsh and penetrating criticism of humanity is revealed: despite the wonders and apocalyptic signs that shake the foundations of the world, the human being remains obstinate, imprisoned in his own habits and sins. The lyrics denounce an almost desperate resistance to change, a refusal to confront the pain that revelation brings with it.

Human obstinacy manifests itself as an impenetrable wall, an inner barrier that prevents the transformation necessary to embrace the divine. Despite having been exposed to the fury of apocalyptic events, humanity persists in the works of his hands, a symbol of a conduct that refuses to abandon the path of destruction. This lack of conversion highlights a profound gap between the appearance of the crisis and man's ability to draw from it a lesson, an inner awakening.

Through the lens of negative theology, we understand how the human heart, even when struck by extraordinary events, remains an enigma, a place where the divine Mystery fails to penetrate. In this context, the revelation of the divine does not materialize in a consolatory light, but manifests itself as a dark void, an invitation to recognize one's own finiteness. Suffering and destruction, however sensational, fail to break

down the barriers of the human ego, thus remaining a warning about the ineffectiveness of external manifestations if not accompanied by an authentic inner change.

Finally, the passage takes the form of an urgent reminder: apocalyptic revelation, while bringing with it the power of judgment, risks remaining incomplete if man does not open himself to the possibility of awakening. Failure to convert then becomes a painful symbol of a spiritual crisis in which the light of the divine remains hidden, demanding a profound commitment to overcome obstinacy and embrace the mystery of existence.

Conclusion

In chapter 9 of Revelation, judgment and suffering are intertwined, but the sprouts of a potential awakening also emerge. The apocalyptic signs, while unleashing destruction and chaos, reveal the unbridgeable presence of the power of the invisible, capable of transforming pain into a profound opportunity for rebirth. In this scenario, negative theology – which teaches us to contemplate the unknowable and mysterious God – merges with the doctrine of revival, inviting us to open our being to a reality that transcends appearances.

This path leads us to understand the intrinsic paradox of the Apocalypse: it tells not only of a catastrophic end, but also of the emergence of a "beyond" destined to reveal itself to those who are willing to let themselves be shaken by the foundations of their certainties. Spiritual progress, in this light, is not a straight line, but a path made up of destruction and reconstruction, where the crisis becomes the seed of a more authentic and conscious rebirth.

Finally, the reading of Revelation 9 takes on a particularly urgent meaning in the contemporary context, marked by global crises, radical changes and a growing search for meaning. The signs of disintegration that the text proposes to us should not be seen only as bearers of terror, but as an invitation to an apocalyptic awakening – a call to recognize that, in the mystery of the divine, lies the key to an inner transformation that can lead to a new era of understanding and hope.